The New and Eternal Covenant

DOM ANSCAR VONIER O.S.B.

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THE
NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT

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The New and Eternal Covenant

By

DOM ANSCAR VONIER, O.S.B.

Abbot of Buckfast

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FOREWORD

THOUGH a book ought to declare its own purpose through that lucidity one expects from any author, it may still be permissible for the writer to say a word as to the nature of his venture to the reader before the latter opens its pages.

For a long time it has seemed to me that many minds may be helped by an exposition of Catholicism which is practically autonomous, in the sense that it is not an exposition of the faith obtained by contrasting it with error, but is a simple consideration of its essentials. Moreover there is in Catholicism an element of transcendence which is very much neglected to-day, as most of our spiritual literature concerns itself with individual manifestations of religious or mystical life. It has been my intention to give this transcendent element of Catholicism its due place. There is a growing literature, perhaps more outside the Church than within it, concerning the respective importance in Christianity of the elements which are called "God-ward" and "man-ward"; in fact there is a definite movement afoot which denies such values in the

Atonement mystery as have reference to the offended rights of God. This book is written to emphasise the "God-ward" side of Catholicism and as a consequence to enhance the institutional aspects of our holy faith. I am conscious that I have undertaken an unpopular task in these days of crypto-modernism. Yet that peace of mind which comes from believing cannot be ours unless we accept resolutely the vast dogmatic truths whose power and whose life are independent of the transient moods and phases of the human mind. I wish to see in the Church that sense of triumph and security, that feeling of spiritual superiority which is essential to Catholicism and without which it must lack the power to satisfy the human heart.

ANSCAR VONIER, O.S.B.

Abbot.

BUCKFAST,

Purification, 1930.

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THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT

I

THE SPEECH OF THE FAITH

IT is an uncontested fact that the Catholic Church has been witnessing during the last four centuries enormous losses and heavy apostasies. The protestantism of the sixteenth century was a terrible landslide, and we are beholding with our own eyes a disappearance of belief to a degree which would have appeared incredible to the staunch churchmen of the ages of faith. It has seemed to me that this instability in the external fortunes of the Church has made us timid, has rendered us nervous, and has deprived us, at least to a certain extent, of that sense of spiritual victory which should never be absent from true Catholic mentality. The forces of disruption which have separated whole races and peoples from the Church seem to have filled us, who have remained faithful through the grace of God, with a sense of terror. I have often wondered how a Catholic would feel concerning his faith if there had never been any

schisms, heresies or apostasies, if the tribulations which have been sent to the Church had been only persecutions from without, from the pagan. Such exterior trials could never dim the vision of the Church's glory because they are the acts of her official enemy : the things that fill the soul with the dark feelings of panic are the losses to the Church in those who have been baptised with her Baptism ; such losses, not the external persecutions of the heathen, are calculated to diminish the joy of our faith and to obscure that certainty of victory which is in Christ. It is in this sense that I should like to know what would be the feelings of a Catholic if the Church had always been supreme mistress over all baptised souls, if she had never suffered from heresies or schism, if all her sons had carried out the precept of S Paul : " That with one mind and with one mouth you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. xv, 6.) Though we may give a certain amount of credence to a saying which is often repeated, perhaps too often, that schisms and heresies and apostasies purify the Church by trying her, there is one evil which those sad events undoubtedly leave behind them, a feeling of restlessness in many devout believers. Moreover, as every theologian will admit, through the struggles with heresy Catholic doctrine loses something of its harmonious

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proportions, as we have to insist on one truth almost to the exclusion of others in our defensive work. Heresies are generally the denial of one specific doctrine, and the Catholic doctor in defence of the endangered dogma has almost to neglect everything else in order to give his full attention to the position that is in peril. A good deal of Catholic theology, though always most true and most orthodox, is not always seen in its due proportions, just as in war the hasty and irregular trenches that are thrown up to shelter the bodies of the men who defend their country are, for the time being, of greater importance than ancient cities far back in the rear.

To be able to state Catholicism to-day as it would have been stated by a theologian of genius on my supposition of there having been no contradictions in the city of God, could not of course be any man's pretension, however deeply we might sigh for such an ideal exposition. At the same time one task certainly ought not to be above our capacity—that of enumerating the permanent, the unalterable, the everlasting elements of Catholicism, and the glories of our inheritance ; glories which no human wickedness, no instability of human mind, no historic happenings could ever dim. I say at once that the Church's behaviour in her official position has never known any other difference than a change

of emphasis, i.e., that at one time under the pressure of detractors and gainsayers she laid stress on the worth of one of her treasures more than of another, because that worth had been called in question. The official expression of Catholicism has remained uniform to an astonishing degree. But the ideal thing which I have before my mind is a state of perfection in the Catholic people itself. I dream of Catholic nations, of Catholics in their millions, entering with intelligence, with full appreciation, into the glories of their faith and giving practical preference to those elements of our divine faith which are its very essence and constitution. I dream of a Catholicism which I would willingly call "classical," in the sense in which the word classical is used in all æsthetical literature. It means a clear apprehension, and that not only by a few but by the many, of essential things as essential, however high and lofty they may be. I would, for instance—for the sake of clarity I already anticipate—describe a clear apprehension of the gift of the Holy Ghost as a classical attitude in Catholics. The Church herself, particularly in her Liturgy, has remained eminently classical; the masses of her people possess spiritual education in the things of Christ in degrees which are immensely varying: fundamentally all Catholics possess the faith, but the

extent of their knowledge of the things of the faith, the way in which the doctrines of the faith affect their intellects, their imaginations, in fact, all their powers is, of course, not one but many, it is high or low, is vast or small, according to individuals and even according to historic periods.

The ideal I am setting before myself is well expressed in the title of my book : The New and Eternal Covenant. I take it for granted, as does every Catholic theologian, that the coming of the Son of God has given us a relationship with God which is new, unique and unalterable. God has entered through the Blood of Christ into a new and eternal Covenant with man, a new and everlasting Testament. The things that constitute that Covenant are what I love to call the classical things of Christianity ; that they are definite things, not haphazard hints or promises or aspirations, but solid, clearly-defined realities, is, of course, beyond doubt ; to enumerate them is the task of the Christian teacher ; to make the faithful know, love and appreciate them is the task of the preacher. Anticipating once more for the sake of not being misunderstood, the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection and of man's bodily resurrection in Christ certainly belongs to the new and everlasting Covenant. We may easily imagine periods in the history of the human mind when, for one reason or another, such a

doctrine becomes actually uninteresting, unattractive, when there is a vague impression astir that such an article of faith is superfluous, irrelevant or even savouring of unspirituality. A neglect, then, with regard to this very doctrine, an indifference towards it, I should call a lack of classicism in the mind of a Catholic, because, in such a case, a feature that is essential in God's new Covenant with man is not seen in its due proportions, is not perceived to be a thing of supreme beauty, in other words, does not interest the mind. I do not, of course, allude to actual denial of the doctrine of the Resurrection in one who is baptised, as such a denial would be apostasy, not a mere lack of proportion in the appreciation of the things of the faith.

It may be asked whether there was ever a period when Christians possessed what we may in future call the classical attitude, when they were endowed with the magnificent gift of habitually appreciating the glories of the new and eternal Testament at their full value, or, at any rate, as full as in the ordinary providence of divine grace it is possible here on earth. I am inclined to think that this happy state of the Christian mentality has been quite common and has lasted for long periods, when even the simple people talked of the things of their faith in language which would show that the knowledge

of the mysteries of Christ was ready and familiar. We may take it for granted that not only the apostolic, but the sub-apostolic ages were classical in the meaning which we give to the word here. This Christian classicism is certainly very evident in the Patristic age. Most of the writings of the Fathers were their sermons to their people, and it is clear even from a superficial perusal of that literature that those holy preachers took for granted in their audiences a point of view which is definitely marked and profoundly characteristic ; the mysteries of Christ are spoken of with an accuracy which to-day we hardly find outside theological schools. This then would be, in my opinion, the test of true classicism in Christianity : if people, quite habitually, without any effort, without their words sounding strange or archaic, spoke of the things of their faith, such as grace, charity, the Body and Blood of Christ, the Holy Ghost, the remission of sins, our incorporation in Christ, our life in Him, of His Resurrection and our own in Him, with ease and facility; meaning the facts in their literal sense, using them as their prayer and as their hymn of praise, expressing them in every possible way. To do this would be truly a magnificent state of mind in the Christian people ; to be awkward in the expression of these matters, to be timid and hesitating, would argue a loss, if

not of faith itself, certainly of clearness of faith.

No one will question the assertion here made that the statement of Christian truth, in whatever way it can be set forth, ought to be, and in fact has been, a masterpiece of expression, a perfect thing of thought and speech and action. Though S Paul furnishes us with the proverbial phrase of the "foolishness of the Cross" this foolishness would be sadly misread if we meant by it imperfection and incapacity in the art of rendering truth; S Paul is the very first to glorify that wisdom of the Christian speech which is the quality of the perfect:

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, neither of the princes of this world that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew. For if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory." (I Cor. ii, 6-8.)

It may be taken as an absolute fact that the way in which the Christian faith is stated at any time in speech, literature and art by a number of men is a sure index of human culture, not only in the supernatural order but even in the natural order. I am conscious of the difficulty of my demand if I am asking for a setting forth of the

Christian faith in this "perfect" form because, frankly, our age, though full of piety, is not one which has a pronounced gift of expression in the matters of religion. I am no fault-finder with the age in which I live, but I do not think I am guilty of too severe a judgement if I do not overrate the artistic value of its utterances in the sphere of religion; this is a freedom of criticism which is left to every Catholic; the matter is too manifest to be in need of apology. S Leo the Great was a saint of the first order, a Pope and a Doctor, whose name is never without its adjective signifying excellence, S Alphonsus Liguori also was a saint of the first rank, a Doctor and a Bishop, but no one will deny that the two men, dealing with the same subject, treat it very differently in their sermons to the people. In S Leo we have the classical exposition, in S Alphonsus we have the imaginative exposition. We should hardly expect a bishop of the period of S Leo to put the matters of Christianity as S Alphonsus puts them; those differences are so palpable that they form the sure basis of all literary criticism. We know how the same spiritual truth was expressed by holy and orthodox men at every given period; reading Catholic literature soon forms the ear so that it can easily detect the variations between the older and the more recent phraseology. I am not

arguing now whether S Alphonsus expressed things better than S Leo : all I mean is that he put them quite differently. It is certainly lawful to maintain that not all ways of expression are equally good ; one is not bound to defend as the best our own modern presentment of Christian things, and it is legitimate to wish to see Catholics in their numbers become familiarised with a form of religious speech that would be a thing of perfection. It is not a belittling of the religion of the simple ones to give utterance to the desire that our Catholicism be thus worded, be thus acted in external ceremonies ; that men and women with their modern culture of intellect be seen united in their thousands in giving expression to their faith, as they are found one-voiced and single-hearted in the great causes of modern life such as science or patriotism. This book will have to be full of apologies to pious people, as I may constantly seem to have a grudge against mere sentiment and imagination in religion ; nothing is further from my intention than to slight what is called " popular piety," as its usefulness in keeping together Catholic masses is great ; but as my very pronounced object is to give prominence to the mighty elements which underlie the most imaginative form of piety I may often seem a critic where I am not critical; in fact, it will be one of my duties to show what a healthy

sign it is when the imagination of the believer may play with the things of religion without degrading them. Yet when all concessions have been made there is the golden vision of the superb structure of the new religion of the redeemed, of the new and eternal Covenant, which haunts one as one is haunted by the memory of the precious mosaics of the Constantine basilicas, with the Christ in Majesty, with the Apostolic College holding their golden crowns, with the sheep that drink from the stream of life that issues forth from under the feet of the triumphant Lamb of God.

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II

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE COVENANT

WHEN the Christian is said to have faith in God and to trust in God in hope, he is credited with spiritual activities of supreme perfection and also of wonderful definiteness. Faith and hope make it possible for us not only to cling to God in some vague, indeterminate loyalty of spirit, but to become sure of the existence and indestructible character of a glorious order of things which have God for their centre and which constitute a Kingdom, a world of superb splendour. They form that "immoveable kingdom" spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews :

"Therefore, receiving an immoveable kingdom, we have grace : whereby let us serve, pleasing God, with fear and reverence. For our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii, 28, 29.)

When we protest in faith and hope that we are sure of God we mean to imply a certainty in more than God's own personal Nature ; we are sure of the immoveable Kingdom, of the spiritual order of God which He has created in Christ Jesus and whose proper name is the new

Testament or new Covenant ; the two words are interchangeable and will be used as synonymous in the pages of this book. The primary and all-dominating idea contained in this concept of Testament or Covenant is essentially, as everybody knows, stability and unchangeableness. This permanence which constitutes the very essence of a covenant is not so much in God Himself whose immutability is not doubted by any creature, but in that spiritual order which He has made and established. That the word Covenant or Testament is synonymous with the word Dispensation is obvious. The two Dispensations, the old and the new, are the two Testaments :

" For these are the two testaments. The one from Mount Sina, engendering unto bondage. . . . But that Jerusalem which is above is free : which is our mother." (Gal. iv, 24 *et seq.*)

So Christ is simply called the " Mediator of the new Testament " and His Blood is always the " Blood of the Testament." Again Christ is called the " Ark of the Testament " because in Him are contained all the treasures of life and wisdom :

" And the temple of God was opened in heaven : and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple." (Apoc. xi, 19.)

The contrast between Christian security and the uncertainties of human conditions on earth is brought out in the same passage in the Apocalypse, for whilst the Ark of the Testament is seen in glory in the temple of God, outside "there were lightnings and voices and an earthquake and great hail."

This indeed is the true meaning of our Christian faith and of our Christian hope, that we have security, not only in God, but also in the things of God : we have a divine order of things which stands immoveable, whose splendour nothing can dim, whose glorious serenity nothing can disturb. Through those virtues of faith and hope which are so aptly called theological virtues we have the guarantee, first that God is faithful, and secondly that His spiritual creation, the new Dispensation, is an imperishable reality. He has made a Covenant with us as He made with the Patriarchs of old, with this difference, of course, that the new Covenant surpasses the old one in splendour as the noon-tide sun excels the dawn in brightness.

That the Son of God should use the term Covenant in connection with the order of things He came to bring about is sufficient authority to justify us in making of the idea of the Covenant a thing of supreme spiritual importance. The circumstance which will be developed later on

that invariably His own Blood should be made by Him the companion of the Covenant gives this great concept all the more solemnity. No two words in His vocabulary could express more forcibly, more drastically, the establishment of a supernatural order than these two words coupled together, Covenant and Blood ; truly heaven and earth might pass away but a Covenant made in Blood could never pass away. The Son of God said the strongest thing possible in the religious language of the world when He spoke of a new Testament in His Blood in order to convey the impression that a spiritual order of things has come into being which can never fail.

In his turn S Paul applies to the mystery of Christ the sacrosanct name of Testament or Covenant :

" Who hath also made us fit ministers of the new testament, not in the letter but in the spirit. For the letter killeth : but the spirit quickeneth." (II Cor. iii, 6.)

It would be superfluous to enlarge upon the significance contained for the Jews in this word Testament or Covenant ; it meant to them the sum of all their hopes. S Paul was writing to the Corinthians when he used the term, but it is evident that his readers, though not Jews, were familiarised with the notion of a Covenant between God and man, in fact, they knew the

history of the old Covenant, so S Paul makes capital out of the idea in its associations with the Mosaic tradition :

" Moses put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel might not steadfastly look on the face of that which is made void." (II Cor. iii, 13.)

This is the symbol in Pauline logic of the obtuseness of the Jewish mind, and, passing from one brilliant hint to another, excited as his mind is by the prophetic possibilities of the old Covenant and of the manner in which it was given and received, he arrives at one of those scintillating heights at which he is seen at his best :

" But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Cor. iii, 18.)

It is evident from the context that S Paul is not speaking here primarily of the vision of the Lord in the glory of heaven ; the earthly Moses with the veil on his countenance is replaced by the Lord who has the " open face," a face full of glory, and this we behold quite steadfastly and boldly with the unexpected result that the beholding affects us to the extent of transforming us, of leaving on us the deep imprint of the Lord Jesus, whose glory is reflected in us " from glory to glory," because the effulgence of that face

is the Spirit and Christ is reflected in us and so we have the image of the Lord "as by the Spirit of the Lord." That S Paul sees in Christ the Mediator of the new Testament is abundantly clear from this text; but what is not less abundantly clear is Christ's unique position as One whose very Personality is the Covenant itself. The old Covenant was in the letter engraven on the tables of stone, the new Covenant is all Spirit; but what is so remarkable in S Paul's reasoning is the phrase "now the Lord is a Spirit." This is the only passage in which S Paul calls Christ Himself "the Spirit." It is manifestly in connection with that contrast which S Paul here makes between the letter and the Spirit that the Lord is here called the Spirit. He is the more perfect Testament, a Testament that has the power of uniting man with God to an unexpected degree.

Though the idea of the Lord being beheld by us with "open face" is a development of the metaphor of the veil upon the face of Moses, the Apostle passes into an entirely new and completely original realm of thought when he says that by beholding the glory of the Lord we "are transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord." The very act of gazing in faith upon the One who in His Person is the new Testament, not in the

letter but in the Spirit, gives the Christian his new features, alters him and makes of him the image of Christ; such a transformation is only possible because the Lord is the Spirit and has at His command all the powers of the Spirit. It is always best when we are confronted with one of S Paul's decisive utterances, couched in metaphor, as is the one just commented upon, to take the general idea it suggests in preference to a strict logical analysis of the component parts of the metaphor. The impression left by a passage like the one with which we are dealing is that of a very glorious thing—the new Testament, who is a living Person in presence of whom all obscurity vanishes, whose splendour we need only accept, we need only behold with awe and love, in order to be transformed ourselves, to be elevated to a higher sphere.

The old Testament is made void in Christ, says S Paul, because He Himself is the new Testament; He, through His Person and His work, is the bond between God and man. For this is the difference between a relationship between God and man which is based on a Covenant and one which has no such foundation, that a covenanted relationship is no mere seeking of God on the part of men, but a stable, well-guaranteed, sworn possession of God by man. In the old dispensation the guarantee was a

promise on the part of God confirmed by an oath.

"Wherein God, meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed an oath." (Heb. vi, 17.)

In the new Dispensation the guarantee is a divine Person in whom there is the fulness of all the things a Covenant could promise.

I trust I am not saying too bold a thing when I suggest that for the moment we drop the thought of our own spiritual activities, of our own possible burdens in the service of Christ, to occupy ourselves fully with the great glory which we have in Him. By doing this we shall not be guilty of the Protestant error of faith without works, but we shall be enabled to see all things in due proportion. It is certainly to be regretted —and here we have an instance of the disturbing effect of all heresy—that the Lutheran extravagance of faith without works renders us timid in accepting in its full glory the faith which I here call the new Covenant of the Spirit, without direct reference to our works. Now it seems to me that, in order to see clearly what we have in Christ, it is better not to think of our own works till a later period, but to accept as an attitude the injunction of Christ Himself :

"So you also, when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say ; We

are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." (Luke xvii, 10.)

Later on we shall see how those very works which sometimes stand in the way of our seeing Christ in His glory as the new Testament in the Spirit, are a portion of that Testament, and are so many rays of that glory. For Christians to think constantly, nay, exclusively of their own activities even in the service of God, to be absorbed, as it were, by the importance of those activities, to make them the all-interesting topic of their meditations, might be a positive disorder, for it would confirm in their minds the conviction that the new Covenant is a Covenant entirely unilateral, a Covenant in which man through his works is the principal mediator ; such is not the truth in Christ. Though truth in Christ means all purity of life, it means such purity, not as the principal thing, not as the substance of the thing, but merely as an effulgence of the deeper glory which is the Lord Himself ; in other words, the perfections of the Son of God, the perfections of His work, the perfections of His Church, such are the things that are first and foremost. To behold them, to believe in them, to praise them, are the primary and essential acts of the Christian life, as for the Jew, in a minor degree, the thing that mattered above everything else was the testament of the fathers, of which the service of

God was a consequence and only a consequence :

" To perform mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy testament. The oath, which he swore to Abraham our father, that he would grant to us. That being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear : In holiness and justice before him, all our days." (Luke i, 72-75.)

No one could have a greater faith in the necessity of good works than myself : to me the Protestant, I mean the officially Protestant, heresy of faith without works is a loathsome psychological monstrosity ; on the other hand it would show an un-Catholic temper of mind to give to good works an undue preponderance in the economy of the new Covenant. So to speak, long before we come to the works by which we glorify Christ we must accept Him in the fulness of His glory ; we know that we shall attain to the good works in our long and intent beholding of that Countenance of the Mediator of the new Covenant, but it would not be generous in the presence of such a One not to admit that He has done everything for us, that He has reconciled us with God long before we knew Him, when we were still " children of wrath," and that without any co-operation on our part we were :

" Called by lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things

according to the counsel of his will. That we may be unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. i, 11, 12.)

To be thus able, in spite of the burden of life, even in spite of the yoke which Christ puts on us, never to lose sight of the gratuitous splendours of the new Covenant of the Spirit is indeed the act of the perfect Christian. It is truly classical Christianity to be so convinced that Christ has done all things for us that we never cease to praise Him for it, to give thanks for it, to celebrate for it the Sacrifice of gratitude, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Far from us to remain fruitless! our very fruitfulness itself in its ungrudging service is part of the perfection of that Testament for the bestowal of which we never cease to glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To go on steadfastly beholding the Countenance of the Lord, in other words, to keep fresh the thought of all that Christ is in Himself and of all He did for us and does for us, is no easy matter in a world so full of disturbing powers; in fact, may it not be said that it is the most difficult thing for all of us to keep that steadfastness of gaze? Everything in life combines to make us forgetful of Christ's share in the redemptive work because we are so taken up with our own struggles. The power of evil is

very near and it succeeds often in terrorising us, in creating feelings of panic in our hearts ; the present ills of the world press on us from all sides, and Christ's redeeming work looks distant, unreal. Those very efforts which we have to make to fight down sin in our own members seem to us the things of supreme moment ; the practice of virtue is an arduous task, and even when we suffer persecution for Christ's sake the bitterness of the hour may be overwhelming, may be a thing of such intense reality that Christ by comparison seems to be a phantom. Thus, without being aware of our downward course in the appreciation of spiritual values, we come to think of ourselves constantly, of our task, of our burden, whilst the redemption which God has freely given us is remembered vaguely and merely as the remote causality of the necessary graces. Such an attitude, if indulged in too long, would certainly bring about a form of Christianity which would have nothing of the Pauline sense of triumph which is an unceasing contemplation of a never-diminished splendour. The relative insignificance of the human struggle with its incidental bitterness is an essential constituent of the perfect Christian mentality. No one seems to have felt more keenly the sadness of human things than S Paul ; yet he knew how to rise above it, how to keep that steadfast gaze

on the Lord Who is Master of life and death :

" For which cause we faint not : but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal : but the things which are not seen, are eternal." (II Cor. iv, 16-18.)

It seems to me that there is with us on the whole an excessive impressionability concerning the works of men, both good and evil, and that we have lost to a certain extent the power of seeing things in proportion, and, again in the words of S Paul—for S Paul must be to us the master of the spirituality of the new Covenant —the gift of understanding how all things may be overcome because of Him that has loved us. Is there any reason why we should not take every word of S Paul literally when in his Epistle to the Romans he practically makes the defeat of the Christian an impossibility? I must send my reader to his Bible to meditate for himself on that progressive enumeration of gratuitous privileges which constitute the new Covenant :

" For whom he foreknew, he also pre-

destinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son : that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren. And whom he predestinated them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. viii, 29, 30.)

Then there is that energetic closing of doors against all despair :

" Who shall accuse against the elect of God? God is he that justifieth : Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus that died : yea that is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii, 33, 34.)

Finally there is the mocking challenge thrown down to every form evil :

" I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii, 38, 39.)

I once again ask the question why is it that these proud accents sound strange in our ears ; has anything happened in the Church, or in the world to render them unreal? Has some new form of ill arisen of which Paul did not know or knowing which he would not have spoken thus?

The answer is, of course, that nothing has been changed ; but through the insidious influences of many false tendencies we have become less daring in Christ, we are more inclined to seek our confidence and our certainty in ourselves than in the Son of God who was delivered up for us. There is a sad lack of generosity, a miserable distrust of God's intention, in all of us :

" He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things ?" (Rom. viii, 32.)

Above all things and before all things to see the gift of God, to praise it, to sing its glories, constitutes that perfect expression of faith which I love to call classical Christianity.

It is evident from all we know of human nature that we need a Redeemer who is truly a Covenant, One whose position can never be affected by any human happenings. To make my thought still clearer may I be permitted to mention a saying of a modernist whose name I leave in obscurity. The man delivered himself of the utterance that if Christ were to appear on earth to-day He would make Himself a schoolmaster ; by which dictum the modernist meant, no doubt, that Christ would shape His usefulness according to certain passing needs and preferences of men ; the preacher did not mean to blaspheme, he simply spoke as one to whom

Christ is everything else except the Covenant of God, the full glory which is manifested to all men for all times in the manner which God alone has selected.

It is good Christian tradition to consider even the external setting of the life of Jesus as a divine arrangement of supreme wisdom, of perfect proportion between the means and the end, so that we think of His life as of the true Ark of the Covenant, containing all perfection and sanctity, a masterpiece of divine art in the spiritual order ; the activities of that life have infinite worth, so have its silences ; its glories and its obscurities, its triumphs and its eclipses, its duration and its ending are all things in traditional Christian thought that contribute towards the complete perfection of that work of the Son of God which is essentially a thing covenanted between Him and the Father :

" Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he saith : Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not : but a body thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I : Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God." (Heb. x, 5-7.)

It would be easy to speculate on possible careers of a Messiah : it is quite the fashion to-day to ask the question : What would Christ

do if He found Himself in one of our modern cities? To Catholics such hypothetical careers of Christ are painful reading; the sanctity of the Lord's passage here on this earth is one of our dearest faiths; that passage is truly the visit of the Most High, it is essentially the coming down of God from heaven, and nothing is lacking to the fulness, to the universality of its influence:

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John i, 14.)

In that mortal life of Christ the old Covenant has its fulfilment and the new one is manifested. We even love the scarceness of the information furnished us by the records of Christ's life, because our faith that God dwelt among us is a greater truth than any narration of His doings whilst He was on earth.

As a well-known piece of literature that reflects this classical Christian mentality, this spirituality of the new and everlasting Covenant, I may indicate the *Te Deum*; it is truly the most perfect instance of the power of Christian expression. I cannot quote it here; my readers may find it in their prayer-book. Critics seem to be unanimous in thinking that it is a composition of the sixth century; every honour to an age that could speak Christian things thus! In the

Te Deum we have that blending of the divine and the human interests which makes the perfect Covenant between God and man. We give praise to Christ for having overcome the sting of death and thus having opened to believers *regna coelorum;* however, we are not forgetful of ourselves who are the people of Christ, but instead of making our fidelity to Him a matter of spiritual worry we make it the object of fervid supplication. *Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.* "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin." We end our hymn of praise still gazing at the King of Glory, *Tu Rex gloriae Christe*: but we end it with a personal note of complete surrender to Him, not in indifference as to what may happen to us, but with fulness of hope in the assurance that we shall not be confounded for ever. *In Te Domine speravi, non confundar in æternum.*

III

THE RICHES OF THE COVENANT

MY task in this chapter would seem at first sight an easy one. I intend to put before my reader those articles of the Christian faith which are concerned with Christ and His redemptive work from the point of view I have treated less technically in terms of a divine Covenant. In order to make my meaning clearer still I need only enumerate those elements of Catholic Christology which are final in themselves, which are prior to man's activities, superior to them, in a way independent of them, though never without a certain direct relationship with man's co-operation. This I say looks like an easy task for any theologian who has been through his course of dogmatic training. If the task is a light one, so much the better for my reader; yet it could not be omitted in the expectation that he himself, the reader, would supplement the omission. We have not excelled in our days in clear thinking, and even the obvious may well be underlined in our teaching and preaching.

A list—I hope the word is not too profane—of those great truths concerning the things which Christ is and has done for us, independently of ourselves, may prove quite illuminating ; such an enumeration will show the true inwardness of that Covenant in Christ which God has made with man. But in reality it is one of the wisest achievements of Catholic theology to state what things in the new Dispensation are gratuitous and to what extent they are so, and thus constitute officially the glorious Covenant. People have not at all times seen in its true meaning the gratuitousness of the new life that is given them ; in a very true sense it is permissible to say that there always has been in man a sub-conscious revolt against the absolute gratuitousness of the Redemption that is in Christ. So my task here is quite a serious one, and its object is, as I have suggested, to state in exact theological language the elements of the new and everlasting Testament, the things which are essentially the gift of God. This genius for the understanding of the " gift " in the Catholic Church produces in her an appreciation of Christ that is eternally new and as everlastingly fresh as the waters of life :

" If thou didst know the gift of God and who he is that saith to thee : Give me to drink ; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he

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would have given thee living water." (John iv, 10.)

It is evident, of course, that only those divine realities constitute the new Covenant which begin in the Person of Christ; so the mystery of man's creation would not be part of it, though God created man without any merit or intervention on his own side, as is obvious from the very definition of creation. The mystery of the Trinity is not the Covenant, but the end of the Covenant; through the new Covenant in Christ man is united with the Trinity. The Incarnation, the coming of the Holy Ghost, are part of the Covenant, but the Trinity in Its eternal life is not. There must be a coming of the Son, there must be a sending of the Spirit, in order that there may be a covenant; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in Their internal life and relationship are not the Covenant, but the end of the Covenant.

It is therefore clear to everyone that the first truth which is to stand at the head of our great list is the Incarnation, the coming of the Son of God in the reality of the human flesh, so that He may be truly our Brother. This one truth contains all the others, and our enumeration is more like working out into its consequences this one infinite, all-embracing fact, that God became Man. This is the new alliance between God

and man : this is the *foedus perpetuum,* the everlasting pact. The gratuitousness of the Incarnation, its priority to every possible human merit, has been eloquently sung by the prophets of old, chiefly by Isaias ; the apostles, and principally S Paul, have been more concerned with the gratuitousness of the Redemption through Christ's Blood, though there are powerful passages in the apostolic writings concerning God's liberality when He gave to undeserving man, at the Nativity, the Humanity of His Son :

" For we ourselves also were some time unwise, incredulous, erring, slaves to divers desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared : Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii, 3-5.)

But the splendour of the gift which nothing could merit is more especially the theme of Isaias :

" For a child is born to us and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace.

His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace. He shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom : to establish it and to strengthen it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." (Is. ix, 6, 7.)

But the Incarnation would not be a Covenant if the Son of God who was born to us were not essentially and radically our Brother, One given to us, though we are completely and hopelessly unworthy of Him. The Incarnate Son of God is profoundly identified now with the human race : He is not ashamed to call us His brethren, and however deeply the Incarnation may modify the fortunes of the human race, may insensibly alter its very temperament, it is all the gift of God, we could do nothing to bring about such a leavening of mankind. This is the work of the right hand of the Most High.

From the moment of His conception in the Virgin's womb Christ was the High Priest of God :

" So Christ also did not glorify himself, that he might be made a high priest : but he that said unto him : Thou art my Son : this day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place : Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech." (Heb. v, 5, 6.)

Though the full function of His Priesthood, the Sacrifice of the new Testament, was to be reserved to the end of His life, was, in fact, to be the actual ending of that life, the passing from this world to the Father, yet the Priesthood as a state and as a dignity was complete from the first moment of His mortal existence. Now priesthood means an essential relationship to man :

" For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God." (Heb. v, 1.)

This consecration of Christ as the Priest is again a magnificent provision made by God for the sanctification of the human race, entirely prior, not only to all human desire of it, but to all human thought of it, since man could not conceive of such resourcefulness on the part of God to raise up our fallen nature. In a secondary way this Priesthood became active at once through prayer ; Christ was praying the prayer of God for mankind when mankind was ignorant of His very existence. More than one Christian mystic has found a garden of delights for his spirit in contemplating those mysteries of the Christ-Personality which were so immediately and so profoundly associated with the welfare of man long before men were aware that such a One was standing in the midst of them :

"John answered them, saying: I baptize with water: but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not. The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me: the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose." (John i, 26, 27.)

Nothing could be more calculated to make us alive to the unshakable stability of the new and eternal Covenant than this thought that He stood amongst men in His full splendour, that He was affecting men on all sides long before they were aware of Him:

"I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from heaven; and he remained upon him. And I knew him not." (John i, 32, 33.)

The *Te Deum* again has fixed in a classical phrase that attitude of active praise and loud-voiced wonderment which ought to be found in all Christian generations: *Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem: non horruisti Virginis uterum.* This is how we ought to be occupied in presence of so much mystery, which, though hidden, is still our most immediate concern.

We come now to Christ's redemptive act in its specific and final stage, His Sacrifice on the Cross. It is more particularly in reference to this act that the gratuitousness of the divine Dispensation struck the mind of S Paul; its priority to all human merit and its validity for all times in an

immovable fashion are also considerations which make the Pauline doctrine of Redemption what it is. To accumulate texts expressing these three aspects of gratuity, priority and permanence is an easy matter ; these texts are the pearls of great price in the Pauline theology. As a rule the three ideas are interwoven in the pregnant phrases of S Paul, but I think that the following quotations may be taken as the classical statements of the three-fold feature of Christ's redemptive work, its complete independence of man's merit, of time and of evolution.

" Who hath delivered us and called us by his holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the world." (II Tim. i, 9.)

" That you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the conversation of Israel and strangers to the testament, having no hope of the promise and without God in this world." (Eph. ii, 12.)

" In the which will, we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once." (Heb. x, 10.)

In connexion with this province of Christian thought an observation which I have made earlier in this chapter finds an application : that the enumeration of the divine elements of our

glorious Covenant is a task of more profundity that would seem at first sight, for in this matter of the Redemption besides the act of Christ, whose worth in itself is infinite, there are external results of a gigantic nature which affect mankind vitally and yet which, in order to be great vitalities and great powers, need not affect every individual of mankind. It is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the new Covenant, theologically speaking. We are truly redeemed, sin has been truly destroyed, the anger of God has been truly appeased, the power of hell has been truly broken, death has been truly overcome, the heavens have been truly opened, through Christ's Redemption. These mighty things are verily the effects of Christ's act, they are Redemption as Christ's act, so to speak, the *actus transiens* of Christ, the thing which in the might of His power He has cast like fire on the earth, where it is as a flame of endless energy whose fierceness nothing can abate. But there is also this other fact, that many individual men are not thus reconciled to God, are not free from the bondage of Satan and have on their souls the burden of sin ; they are under the anger of God and their debts to the divine justice have not been paid. " There seems to be here a tinge of unreality, a hint of nominalism in Catholic theology, which takes mere ideas for great

realities," says the enemy of Catholic thought. For him there is no other Redemption than the Redemption which is shown forth in the individual man who is actually redeemed. Yet our whole Catholic dogma would fall to pieces if we had to consider as mere figments of the intellect those universal results of the Incarnation just recited. I admit that it is no easy matter to put such things into language that may not be open to misunderstanding. The sinner who to-day commits sin, offends God truly, brings upon himself the anger of God, makes himself the slave of Satan ; but all these evils, great as they are, are yet only the evils of the individual, there is now no kingdom of evil, there is now no kingdom of sin, there is now no kingdom of Satan ; those dark realms existed once, but Christ on the Cross has shattered them for ever ; the strong One has entered into the house of the " strong man armed " and has taken away " all his armour wherein he trusted " :

" And despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open shew, triumphing over them in himself." (Col. ii, 15.)

When in Catholic theology we say, as we say so constantly, that the Son of God through His Blood has entirely satisfied divine justice, we mean this to be the greatest external result of the

Redemption, but a result which is all God-wards, not man-wards. Men have tried in our own days to humanise the whole of Redemptive theology, to make it consist in man's advantages, to find a true meaning for its high technical phrases in the changes of the human heart. "Redemption," they have said, "what is it but man changed in himself? This is the appeasing of God's anger, this is real forgiveness of sin and propitiation, this is the only sense in which man is delivered from the bondage of Satan." It would be superfluous for me to point out to my reader how such views are destructive of all dogma, but I just quoted them in order to make him see what is the logical outcome of that unwillingness to accept as great objective realities, standing *in rerum natura,* the universal results of Christ's Redemption, the paying of the debt to the divine justice, the appeasing of God's anger, the atonement for sin, the meriting of all grace, the destruction of the empire of Satan, the victory over death, the opening of the gates of heaven; these things, though affecting mankind so profoundly, are elements, not of man's individual transformation, but of the new and eternal Covenant.

Christ's Resurrection has, as everybody knows, not only unsurpassable historical worth but also soteriological worth; that is to say, it is a part of the Dispensation of grace and salvation,

and not only unimpeachable evidence of Christ's divinity. Both aspects are strongly emphasised by S Paul. Here we are concerned with that side of Christ's Resurrection which to mankind has become newness of life, which is soteriological. Through Christ's Resurrection something has taken place in the world of spirits, in the world of souls, nay, even in the world of bodies, which is ever active and which never can be checked any more ; the Resurrection is with us, so to speak. So ardent was S Paul's preaching of the Resurrection in his discourse to the Athenians that the Greeks actually took the Resurrection to be a new deity :

" And certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics disputed with him. And some said : What is it that this word-sower would say? But others : He seemeth to be a setter forth of new gods. Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts xvii, 18.)

We walk in the Resurrection of Christ as in a heavenly atmosphere :

" (Christ) was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification." (Rom. iv, 25.)

We must then consider the mystery of Christ's Resurrection as one of those divine privileges, in fact the greatest of them all, which are truly and most safely possessed by mankind, whatever may be the share in them of individual men. We

have in the Resurrection a permanent upraising, we glory in it as in our supreme inheritance, through it our whole life receives a loftiness which would not be believable if we had not God's word for it :

" Even when we were dead in sins, (God) hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved) and hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Jesus Christ. That he might shew in the ages to come the abundant riches of his grace, in his bounty towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you are saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God. Not of works, that no man may glory." (Eph. ii, 5-9.)

We come now to those elements of the new Covenant which are no longer in Christ's Person, but which are the direct outpourings of its sanctity. The coming of the Holy Ghost is the act of Christ which is the result of His Ascension :

" It is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you : but if I go, I will send him to you." (John xvi, 7.)

The Spirit is with us through a presence that resembles the presence of Christ while He was still on earth ; that is to say, we have the Spirit dwelling among us with a permanency

which is unique, and which was not known before the great Pentecost.

"And I will ask the Father : and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever : The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him. But you shall know him ; because he shall abide with you and shall be in you." (John xvi, 16, 17.)

The abiding of the Holy Ghost is again to be considered as a divine establishment, a thing that cannot go back ; men may enter into it more or less, but it is always present in all the fulness of its vitalities.

The institution of the Sacraments, the founding of the Church, are only aspects of one and the same matter : the permanent presence of a divine power, absolutely inexhaustible in its wealth, which stands on this earth as the tree of life. Our part is to be the beneficiaries of that power of life ; all we can do is to enter into it ; to penetrate into it means salvation and sanctification for individual human beings. Again, our good works are things provided by God, not the haphazard efforts of man, but a true divine inheritance to which we are called. S Paul completes what he said concerning our being made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places with the words :

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii, 10.)

These considerations are far from exhausting the subject of the riches of the new Covenant: more will be said under one form or another in the chapters which follow. This book, after all, can only pretend to be the development of one central idea, and its various chapters corroborate each other. But I think I have made it sufficiently clear for my reader to grasp the thought which is so dear to me, that there exists a realm of wonderful spiritual realities in which mankind, as a whole, is the direct beneficiary, and in which each one of us may find, not only life, but abundance of life. These things precede all our activities and works; they are immensely greater than anything we can ever achieve; all we may hope is this, that we should be partakers in them, that we should be found in them, that, in the words of S Paul, we should be "co-partners of his promise in Christ Jesus, by the Gospel" (Eph. iii, 6). This is what constitutes truly that attitude of the Christian mind which is essentially a heaven-given sense of possession in the things of Christ. We, with more assurance than any patriarch of old, may call upon God to remember the Covenant which He has not only

sworn unto us that He would give us, but which He has made into a living Thing in the Person of His only Begotten Son.

IV

AN ENTERING IN

THE phraseology of the Gospels ought to be sacred to us, not only on account of its divine origin, but also on the score of its power of expression. If the Son of God speaks in human language we must take it for granted that He knows the bearing and the consequence of every one of His words for untold generations of believers. From the very beginning, right through the sacred Gospels, our Lord speaks of the supreme spiritual act of man as of "an entering in." Whatever Christ's share in bringing salvation to mankind may be—and no one word is made to stand for that share of Christ—it is undoubtedly the obligation incumbent on man to enter into what the Son of God has prepared for him. Nothing could more forcibly bring home those features of gratuity, priority and permanence which, as I have already said, belong to the new Covenant, than the suggestion that man is expected to betake himself into a spiritual place where he is

to have his being and his movement. As this point of view is of supreme importance for the understanding of the whole Christian Dispensation it is worth our while to approach it from another angle and make the notion of " entering into " the Kingdom bear out what we have to say concerning the Covenant.

That this idea of " entering in " was deeply rooted in the mind of Christ appears from the strong imagery with which He surrounds the description of that entrance :

" Enter ye in at the narrow gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction : and many there are who go in thereat ; How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life : and few there are that find it." (Matt. vii, 13, 14.)

We have here the image of people who walk round and round the city walls to find a hidden gate which is opened only as by special order to the initiated.

" It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Luke xviii, 25.)

Could human imagination produce a more formidable simile to express the stern realism of that idea of entering into the things of God? Far from being a vague and indeterminate notion it is a thing in which men are either successful or

baffled to a degree which is almost ludicrous.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men : for you yourselves do not enter in and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter." (Matt. xxiii, 13.)

The enemies of Christ watch at the gate of the Kingdom, pulling back those who have already a foot on the threshold. No other idea in the Gospels is brought out with greater emphasis than this one of entering in. It may even be said that it gave rise to the boldest figure of speech ever used by Christ, when He spoke of the camel as trying to pass through the eye of a needle. The metaphor of the entering in is completed by that other divine simile which we find in the Gospel of S John, where Christ speaks of Himself as the door :

"I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved : and he shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures." (John x, 9.)

When we are thus bidden to enter in one paramount fact is guaranteed to us : we shall find a fully constructed city into which we may enter, not wind-swept, empty space. Through endless reiterations of the same thought Christ makes clear that He has prepared for us, in His divine might, a place that will receive us, that will be our home. Whether that place be called

a kingdom or a city or the banqueting hall of the great King or the house of God or a Covenant, the thought is always the same: we enter through narrow gates, not into desolate voids but into a fulness of life which is there before us, which is prepared for us, and into which we are admitted, but which, if we allowed ourselves to be turned away at the very threshold of the gate, would go on in its full intensity without us. It is a profound element in Christian mentality to be thus conscious of entering into a life that is greater than our own, independent of our own, but which, the moment it has taken us up, becomes our own to a marvellous degree. The theological importance of the Gospel term "to enter in" cannot be exaggerated. To grasp that term well makes all the difference between oneness of faith and heresy. The orthodox Christian is essentially one who has entered fully and unhesitatingly into an order of grace and truth to which he brings nothing of his own; his sole contribution is precisely that complete surrender of himself to the great thing he finds. The heretic, on the contrary, tries to hold parley in the gate with the great power that has its seat inside. The believer knows instinctively that the House of God is great indeed, and that it has no need of him.

No created mind could tell the variety of ways

which God has at His disposal for the sanctification of His creatures. With all truthfulness, however, we may speak of at least two divine alternatives : on the one hand God might shape His saints, one after another, independently of each other, and when He has formed them in all their millions, call them His people, and make them the repository of all His graces. On the other hand God might form one full and complete Person, who in Himself is the universal repository of all grace, who in Himself contains all grace, so that the beginning of God's work is already its most final and complete expression. Whatever manifestations of grace there are after, they are not truly new manifestations but, more exactly, fruits of the first manifestation. We know that God has acted in this wise ; God has started with fulness of grace, with infinitude and immensity of grace ; whatever graces there will be in the course of ages they are all so many outpourings of that first, full grace. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not only the first and greatest of the saints, He is the source of all sanctity, and, even more, He in Himself is already all sanctity ; there is no new sanctity after Him :

" And of his fulness we all have received : and grace for grace." (John i, 16.)

In the Christian dispensation, then, every

development of sanctity must be an entering into a finally-established fulness ; Christian sanctity could never be anything else. This is S Paul's great doctrine of the fulness of Christ :

"And he (God) hath subjected all things under his feet and hath made him head over all the church, which is his body and the fulness of him who is filled all in all." (Eph. i, 22, 23.)

The Church is Christ's fulness in the sense that Christ flows over into her, not that she flows into Christ. She does not fill up Christ with her sanctity, but Christ fills her with the sanctity that is His. It ought not to be difficult for us to understand this mystery of Christ's fulness. In a higher way the Blessed Trinity, when creating the universe, created it, not to be filled by it nor satisfied by it, but to fill it with glory. For this reason we do not say that the universe is superfluous, though it adds nothing to God. So likewise, the Christian saints of all times are not superfluous, though they do not mean a real increase in supernatural sanctity, as, in Christ, all supernatural sanctity is as full as it can be. This great principle once accepted—and it is the very centre of Christian theology—we see at once how all conversion and all progress must be an entering in : we enter into what is, into Christ's sanctity in one way or another. The elect who are successively and finally added

unto Christ become in their turn so many mansions of the Spirit; that is to say, we also enter into them as we enter into Christ, their merits being, as it were, so many extensions of the Christ-merit. And as ages roll along, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, becomes wider and wider as the elect are received into heaven, but at no time is there anything in heaven in the way of merit and sanctity which was not in the beginning in the Lamb whose light shines through the whole city.

It is easy to see that our view of the Christian life will be profoundly modified as we lay stress on this entering into a realm of grace and truth fully established or as we neglect this fundamental concept. There is simply no limit to the possibilities of such a view of the Christian life, and the meanest human existence becomes something vast and marvellous the moment we can believe of it that it has entered truly into that realm. Ordinary notions concerning morality could no longer meet the case of such an existence; the heavenly citizenship is not only a superior kind of morality, it is a sanctity of a new kind, it is the true Christian sanctity. As Christians we are initiated into the mysteries of God, into divine doings, and our human efforts, however correct, are feeble things, by comparison, almost things of darkness, in

presence of the activities of Christ's kingdom into which we have been taken up. That such is really the case is proclaimed by every article of our faith. Without this fundamental notion of entering into a kingdom of grace infinitely greater than ourselves, we can understand neither the Incarnation nor the Communion of saints, nor the Sacraments, nor grace, nor pardon for sins, nor the bond of charity, nor the Eucharistic mystery nor the abiding of the Spirit. All these Christian verities and powers are at bottom one and the same thing, the ushering of the Christian into the fulness of Christ's life in Himself and in His elect. There are, of course, the works of our supernatural life, deeds done by us; but such works, though they proceed from us, proceed even more from the Christ that is in us. All true theology ought to start with this fundamental assumption that the Christian soul is not an isolated being sanctified by God, but that it is a member of the Body of Christ. This expression "a member of the Body of Christ" seems to me the only satisfying metaphor to render tangible the most mysterious of all spiritual phenomena, man's entering into Christ. It is, of course, a metaphor, but one that seems to come nearer to reality than anything else human language can produce.

It is only a vivid faith in that paramount doctrine that gives to all other doctrines their due proportion and position. Think of the Christian soul, however weak and imperfect, as being carried along on the immense tide of the pacific ocean of the stable merits of Christ and you will not find it difficult to allow that all baptised souls are precious in the eyes of God.

V

THE OPPOSITE POLE

IN order to define the Catholic position more clearly, theologians have had recourse more than once to the simple device of imagining the very opposite of the Catholic dogma, so as to bring out truth by its contrary. In this matter of the divine Covenant no such imaginary device is necessary. The grim historical reality of modernism has furnished a fact which provides a contrast more complete than any fiction. May we not define modernism as a total negation of every kind of such presupposition as is included in the idea of a Covenant? For this is the very characteristic of a Covenant, that it creates realities which for ever after are to be taken for granted, are to be presupposed, in all the workings of humanity. In the modernistic theory all higher life is experience, but an experience by which individual humanity realises itself more and more. If modernism were at all inclined to talk of presuppositions, it would presuppose one thing only, the sub-conscious in man, which

becomes more and more conscious. For one thing this summary of all errors, modernism, has no use : for realities which do not enter into man's consciousness in one way or another. No doubt many modernists would admit certain historic facts, the realisation of which by the individual man they would call religion. Of course, from their point of view, the realisation would be much more truly religion than the historic fact, but the complete modernist is not even in need of the historic fact ; to pass from the state of unconsciousness into a state of experience is all he postulates. But the modernist, both moderate and extreme, is the natural enemy of all those Christian notions which give worth and importance to things that will never enter into the domains of man's consciousness and experience. Such things they would call non-religious, non-spiritual, even if they admitted their objective reality ; they would say that no one can be religious by holding a faith in a redemption which does not give a sense of being redeemed ; they would despise a prayer which has for its object graces which do not make themselves felt. In the domain of the experimental it is wonderful to see to what a degree the modernist copies the Catholic : he will adopt, almost in its entirety, all our theory on mental prayer ; he will make his own the whole inheritance of Catholic

mysticism ; whatever has been the mystical experience of any Catholic saint may be grist for the mill of the modernist ; experience is his forte. But ask him to make a profession of faith in the transcendent redeeming power of Christ's Cross and he will show signs of irreconcilable mental hostility ; ask him to believe in sacramental power, independent of man's conscious reaction to that power, and he will tell you that he has no faith in magic. In this very thing modernism has been a danger to many generous minds, for it has preached spirituality—individualistic, experimental spirituality—almost with the fervour of a S Teresa ; it has spoken of the Kingdom of God within us in words which a S Ignatius could not surpass ; but it ignores that Kingdom of God which is outside us, which has a being independent of our own. One could easily yield to the temptation of preaching the doctrine of the divine Covenant just with a view to establishing the very opposite of modernism. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that modernism is the whole of Catholicism minus those elements which I may call divine presuppositions. Protestantism could not thus be defined, for it admitted the divine presuppositions. In one particular it even exaggerated them, because it made man's sanctification and salvation a thing entirely outside himself, a matter of imputation and arbitrary

predestination. But may we not say that modernism is the nemesis of Protestantism through that complete denial of everything that is not human experience? For there is in primitive Protestantism already the root concept of modernism ; the Lutheran faith is essentially a thing of experience ; now the complete working out of this is modernism. No doctrine is in itself alien to modernism, which can believe anything and everything, provided that religious experience goes far enough and proves it. *A priori* modernism would not deny transubstantiation, if with the progress of spiritual psychology such a recondite thing ever became experimental ; the only things it rejects are the *a priori* suppositions of dogmatic Catholicism ; for these it has nothing but abuse and derision.

It is difficult in a work like this to avoid all the expressions one would like to avoid. Thus I am no friend of the term "institutional" in connexion with religion. But to eschew a word which is used so constantly to-day in theological literature would be useless prejudice ; so I may well make the best of the expression.

A modernist need not necessarily be an enemy of institutional religion, if we employ the phrase in a broader sense ; one could hold the whole metaphysical apparatus of modernism and still find room for institutional religion ; the spiritual

experiences which are the only *credo* of the modernist could be wisely organised, could become an institution, in fact, could become an *ecclesia* of fellow-spirituals, provided their respective experiences were found to harmonise in practice. One has read most gratifying descriptions of the mystical body of Christ written by modernists, and one has seen in their books the Church and its members extolled to the skies. Such effusions have deceived even the very elect, for often one word only—a word that might easily elude the unwary—betrayed the ghost of modernism. Experience is the word. The true enemies of institutional religion have been the puritans and the nonconformists, for whom nothing is of worth except the individualistic. An institution is neither a help towards spirituality nor a result arising from it in the eyes of the puritan ; the modernist would not say as much : in fact, he would say the very opposite. Perhaps in moments of unguarded speech modernists may have denounced institutional religion because by it they meant religion that is not experimental ; but such is not the temper of modernism. It can recite the whole creed of the *una sancta Apostolica Ecclesia,* meaning, of course, by this consecrated formula a vast human experience. But true institutional religion is covenanted religion and as such goes not only beyond the

experimental but also beyond the personal, beyond the human, beyond the whole assembly of human individuals ; it is a religion that has elements which transcend all that man has ever felt or done ; it is organised religion, not in the sense that religious men have leagued themselves together into a society and administer their religious affairs as a state—as I have pointed out, modernism would be quite capable of entertaining such an ambitious scheme—true institutional religion organises man spiritually, independently of man, it governs him without leaving him any option, it stands before him as an authority greater than himself, it presents him with laws and provides him with graces and means of salvation which are ready-made. The administration of institutional religion, at least in its essentials, is an *a priori* settlement, not the conclusions of prudent men. In this connexion, organisation is not identical with institution ; the latter is the greater of the two, the former is only one of its results. Taken in this sense, institutional religion is a sharply defined thing which we may accept or reject, but we know what we mean by it. This is the kind of religion against which thousands of preachers in non-Catholic pulpits are thundering, denouncing it as a base influence, a poison to all true religion.

Like the modernist, *ex professo,* the enemy of all institutional religion becomes the great advocate of mysticism ; in fact, to him mystical experience is impossible inside institutional religion. He also has tried to appropriate most of the Catholic inheritance of the personally spiritual ; he is a great admirer of S Francis of Assisi and irreconcilable enemy of every Pope that ever lived. He sees martyrs there where the Catholic historian sees rebels, and he is not disinclined to read the whole Gospel of Christ in the light of a great emancipation, Christ Himself being the hero of a revolt against the yoke of institutional religion. His enthusiasm for the Christ of his own creation is in direct proportion to his loathing of every bond of the spirit. It has become difficult for our contemporaries to get rid of this impression of the revolutionary Christ, of the Christ in opposition to an established institution. The creative Christ, the Christ who builds up a spiritual house on well-prepared foundations, the Christ of the Covenant, is not known to them. Even for Catholics there is need of constant watchfulness in our days lest our faith be more a faith in a negative power than in a positive, creative, divine Personality. Christ's war against the Pharisees and high priests could be no justification for such an attitude. The Gospel is not a morbid tale of personal

antagonism between Christ and His enemies; that antagonism has its place in the Gospel but it is not its leitmotiv; it is all in proportion, and the love that surrounds Christ in the sacred narrative is by far a greater thing, historically speaking, than the hatred.

VI

THE PLEDGE OF THE SPIRIT

THE greatest of all the elements of the new and eternal Covenant is the Spirit. The Church is the house of the Spirit, the home of the Spirit; He dwells therein as He dwells nowhere else. The phrase of S Paul: "You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance." (Eph. i, 13, 14) indicates the place of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost in the mystery of the Covenant. As a Covenant, again in Pauline thought, is essentially a pact, an oath, the metaphor of the seal and of the pledge is most illuminating and helpful to those who meditate on the riches of this blessed Testament. Seal and pledge signify possession and retention by the object sealed, by the person to whom the pledge is given; the Holy Ghost is therefore an integral part of the Dispensation of the Covenant in the sense that He is personally granted to the Church, not only as a future promise but as an actual endowment. The Spirit who is the pledge of our inheritance

is, by His very nature, an exclusive Spirit who is not to be found elsewhere than in the Christian soul :

" The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him. But you shall know him ; because he shall abide with you and shall be in you." (John xiv, 17.)

This is what we mean when we say that Christianity is entirely supernatural. It is a supremely specialised religion because it is made up of gifts whose very existence, not to say whose worth, is known to those only who possess them. The Spirit that abides with the Christian is not a communicable privilege : there are no manifestations of that Spirit except in direct Christian life ; He cannot be imitated ; He cannot be simulated. There is no intermediary stage between the spiritual and the non-spiritual, they are two classes completely apart. The Spirit is something as original in the composition of the Covenant as the Blood of Christ.

We come then to the question of the mystery of the first Pentecost. What was the gift bestowed on the Church on that day? That an entirely new gift came to the Church is evident from all the genius of the New Testament. It would not be enough to say that the Holy Ghost was then given in a fuller measure than had been

the case before. No, the Pentecost which took place ten days after the Ascension of the Lord was a thing unique in the history of the world, as unique as the Last Supper, as unique as the Death on Calvary. The Spirit had not been given before and was given in that ever-blessed hour, the ninth hour of the fiftieth day after the Easter of the Redemption.

The Holy Ghost had dealings with saintly men from the very beginning. Of Him it is said in the Creed that He had spoken through the mouth of the prophets : *Qui locutus est per prophetas;* in fact there could be no holiness of any kind without the Spirit of God. Yet the Pentecost of the New Testament is an immense thing, an entirely new thing, and the Spirit is with us in a way not known to the prophets and kings who had a desire to see what we see, but did not see it; who had a desire to hear what we hear, but did not hear it. It is not too much to say that the presence of the Spirit in the Church of Christ since Pentecost is as new as is the presence of the Son of God since the Incarnation. God was always with man ; God had walked with man ; God had made of man His friend ; yet it cannot be said that God had become Man or that He dwelt among men in the way in which He dwells among us since those things were accomplished in Mary which had been foretold by the Lord.

The Incarnation is an entirely new way for God to be with man, the abiding of the Paraclete in the New Testament belongs to the same plane of reality ; it is as new, as original we might say, as the Birth of the Word in time. It would not be allowable to call it the incarnation of the Third Person of the Trinity because the Spirit did not take flesh as the Word took flesh. What I say is this : that the coming of the Paraclete is of the same kind as the coming of the Son of God ; in both instances there is a true *descensus de coelo,* a true coming down from heaven, and there had been no such descent before. In what way this new advent differs so profoundly from the whisperings of the Spirit in the ancient world before Christ, theologians have tried to understand and explain ; but they are faced with as great a mystery as the mystery of the Incarnation. As it is God's secret how God became man, so it is God's secret how the Spirit of God dwells in man ; but in both of these sublime instances it is literally true that a divine Person and no one else has come from heaven and has dwelt with man on earth.

I could say here all that has been written by theologians in order to explain the meaning of this new abiding of the Paraclete. But the wisest of them confess that all their words are but as childish babbling. They state, for instance,

that through the coming of the Holy Ghost the Christian soul has a special and exclusive orientation towards the Third Person of the Trinity. With S Paul they say that we are sealed in the Holy Ghost as we are sealed with the sign of Christ in Baptism. This is a clear insinuation that the Paraclete is as much to us as the Word Incarnate, but I think it is sufficient for all the purposes of Christian theology to affirm this parity between the coming of the Son and the coming of the Holy Ghost, though the One came taking flesh whilst the Other took, as it were, the whole Church to Himself.

In this connexion the book of the Acts of the Apostles gains immensely in theological importance, because it is truly the Gospel of the Holy Ghost, as the writings of the four Evangelists are the Gospel of the Incarnate God. In the Acts we have the history of the manifestation of the Spirit, and there is no reason why the Acts should not be regarded as depicting the normal state of the Church of Christ. We know that most of the doctrine of the Spirit, as enunciated by Christ, has been recorded by S John. The Acts, on the other hand, have for their author S Luke, who was not one of the twelve to hear Christ's majestic utterances concerning the Spirit, utterances that fill the interval betwen the mystical Sacrifice of the Last

Supper and the pouring out of the Blood in the Passion. Yet there is such complete harmony between the promise of the Spirit as found in the Gospel of S John and the realisation of that promise in the early Church that one could almost feel tempted to make of S John the inspirer of S Luke. Nothing could be easier for my reader than to verify for himself this all-pervading belief in the Spirit in the early Church as shown in S Luke's narrative. The Spirit has become truly that "other Paraclete," that other companion, that other Friend abiding with them after Christ's departure :

" I will ask the Father : and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever." (John xiv, 16.)

The assurance of the Son of God that He would not leave the Apostles orphans has become true in a most striking fashion, for if there is one note completely absent in the mentality of the early Church it is the feeling of loneliness and bereavement ; there is a fulness of life, there is a spiritual contentment, there is an assurance of outlook which was never surpassed in the days when Christ Himself walked with His Apostles and worked before their eyes wonders and miracles that filled them with astonishment. The Acts are the best explanation of that almost bewildering statement of Christ :

" I tell you the truth : it is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you : but if I go, I will send him to you." (John xvi, 7.)

Truly when we read the Acts of the Apostles we find everywhere a spiritual maturity, nay, a boldness even, and a daring of behaviour which would not be possible if there were a Leader in human form whose word would be supreme law. The Apostles themselves now speak as guides and lawgivers :

" It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things." (Acts xv, 28.)

The Apostles have reasoned to the full consciousness of their power, a consciousness which, humanly speaking, would not have been possible with the over-shadowing Personality of Christ still visibly present among them. May it not be said that Christ's words just related, as to the necessity of His departure, contain the most beautiful and the most interesting problem of spiritual psychology? The removal of the visible, the personal presence of the Leader, far from diminishing the influence of that Leader, brings Him out before man in His full proportions. He is seen by the eye of the mind as He has never been seen before. He becomes active with a universal kind of activity, nay, He

seems to be more present than when the eye of the flesh could behold Him :

" Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts vii, 55.)

This vision of Stephen is truly the Christian vision all the world over, in the power of the Spirit. Christ was emphatic in His declaration that His departure from this earth would not only be no loss but would be a positive gain. Such is certainly the impression made on us when we read the Acts of the Apostles :

" He shall glorify me : because he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi, 14.)

This by itself would differentiate profoundly the abiding of the Paraclete in the Christian Church from those breathings of the Spirit which inspired the prophets of old. The Spirit which came down at Pentecost was essentially the Spirit through whom Mary conceived, and who gives us Jesus in a new and more intimate way. The coming of the Spirit is not a superseding of Christ. Far be it from us even to hint at such a mis-statement of so high a mystery. It is not even a succession of one power following upon another power, as if Christ had done His share in the redemption of man and gone back to the Father, leaving the Spirit to take up the work.

The Spirit that descended comes with all the aroma of the Incarnation in His wings. There is no discontinuity, there is not even succession, but there is inwardness taking the place of outwardness. The invisible Christ, the Spirit who was in Christ all along, now rules the Church and rules it with an energy and efficiency that make Him again into something almost palpable and outward, for if there is a characteristic of that Epiphany of the Spirit which began at Pentecost it is this, that the Spirit speaks and acts manifestly and that the works of the Spirit are visible. In some instances His presence is even more manifest than the outward sacrament of water. When Peter spoke the words of the Gospel to Cornelius and his household :

"The Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And the faithful of the circumcision, who came with Peter, were astonished for that the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter answered : Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts x, 44-48.)

May it not be said that in this thing we have again one of the profoundest originalities of

Christianity, a differentiation so far-reaching that it makes all comparison with other religions impossible? One and the same Dispensation can be expressed in terms of flesh and blood and in terms of Spirit; the work of Christ is the work of the Holy Ghost in all the things that are the Church's sanctification. We do not say, indeed, that the Holy Ghost redeemed the world, but we say very truly with S Paul, that: "Christ by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted to God" as the Victim of our salvation.

It is the Holy Ghost who saves the Christian Dispensation from being merely an historical event. Through the Spirit all things that Christ did and said are permanently with us. Through the Spirit we have the Eucharist, though not in the sense of the Protestant who makes of the mystery of the Last Supper an exclusively spiritual thing, by which in reality he means an exclusively mental thing; the Spirit is at the root of the Eucharistic mystery in the sense in which He is at the root of the Incarnation itself; for it is through the power of the Spirit that bread is changed into Christ's Body and wine into the Blood of Christ, according to the universal phraseology of Christian tradition.

There is perceptible amongst our moderns a worship of the Spirit which makes of the Holy Ghost, not another Paraclete who receives from

Christ and announces to us, but a new power, succeeding the personal Christ and completely replacing Him. Such, of course, is not the true Covenant of the Spirit. Through the Spirit the personal Christ becomes present ; our worship of the Spirit is unique in this sense that it brings Christ near to us.

One cannot help being impressed by the extremely realistic presentment of the gift of the Spirit in Apostolic literature ; the Christian can no longer do anything without his action being a re-action of the Spirit. If he is false in his dealings with the Church, he is said to lie to the Holy Ghost ; the gifts of the Spirit are so perceptible that Simon, the converted Magus, offers money in exchange for them ; the infidelities of the Christian heart are represented as a saddening of the Spirit ; nay, the Christian has even the terrible power of extinguishing the Spirit in his soul, as a lamp is extinguished in a room. The Apostles go forth to give the Spirit to men whom the deacons had baptized, and certain men are known for the more abundant measure of the Spirit that is in them as others are known for their learning and eloquence. The possession of the Spirit is so evident that it renders a man fit for a higher office in the Church :

" Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among

you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts vi, 3.)

The Spirit orders the life of the early Christians, sending men out to special missions and in all things behaving with the supreme authority of the Master of the house. In very truth the Christian Church, as seen in Apostolic days, is the House of the Spirit. She possesses Him with a certainty, she makes use of Him with an assurance which are only possible because God has sworn to give her the Spirit as He has sworn to give her a High Priest in the Person of His Son.

VII

LITURGY

IT is evident that a religion into which there enters a Covenant is profoundly differentiated from one which is without such a divine pact. The whole response of man to the advances of God must be deeply affected by the presence of a Testament. It is the purpose of this chapter to investigate the nature of the Christian worship thus modified by the new and everlasting Covenant.

In order to avoid confusion it will be a matter of great utility to define more precisely the meaning of the word "worship." In a true sense everything man does in response to God's goodness towards him may be called worship ; all the acts of faith, of hope and charity and of all the other virtues which have God for their object. Such a definition of worship is, however, too vague to be of use in our theological essay. A more serviceable description of worship is this : that we make it consist in an acknowledgement of

what God is in Himself, of what He is to us, and of what we are to Him. This acknowledgement may take every conceivable form, but its radical character is always the same ; it is an admission of a fact, not a desire for the non-existing, not a dream about possibilities, not a fear concerning contingencies, but a recognition of what is in God and of what is in man through God. To acknowledge, to admit, to profess the existence of certainties in the whole supernatural realm, such is worship. We may philosophise and theorise concerning the unknown mysteries of divinity but we only worship what we know to be reality. It is not necessary, of course, that we should comprehend that reality in order to worship it : it is sufficient that we should be certain of its existence. Thus we worship the Blessed Trinity, but we do not worship merely speculative things in the nature of God.

The acknowledgement of the divine reality which constitutes worship may be, as I have insinuated, most varied ; it may be a thing of thought, of speech, of external gesture ; it may be a physical thing, it may be an intellectual act ; it may be an individual attitude, it may be the behaviour of a whole crowd ; it may affect single persons, it may sway entire nations. Then again the acknowledgement may be concerned with every known reality of the supernatural

world. In worship we acknowledge the creative power of God as well as the redemptive power of God, we profess our faith in the Trinity as well as in the Incarnation ; we admit all that God has done and is doing for man in heaven and on earth. Worship again is an acknowledgement that expresses itself in adoration, in thanksgiving, in praise, in repentance, in admiration, in every possible mode of thought and will.

Having thus defined worship in terms of acknowledgement and acceptance of divine realities it is easy to perceive how the existence of a Covenant is bound to affect it : for if ever there was a divine verity, that supreme pact between God and man we call the Covenant is such. Now it is the task of Christian worship to admit and to proclaim this unchanging reality in every possible fashion. So Christian worship must be something *sui generis,* an original thing in the history of human religions. This very originality justifies a new name for the more generic term of worship : Christian worship is essentially Liturgy, a term that seems to convey the presence of mysterious things, of gifts and sanctities amongst men when they are occupied with the great work of giving to God due acknowledgement of all He has done for them.

Liturgy has another additional element of supreme importance which need not be

necessarily contained in worship, generally so-called. The divine realities whose very acceptance is worship, may be such that in one way or another they are actually within the disposal of man, so that the treasures of the divine Covenant are unlocked and poured into man's bosom for him to make use of. This is Liturgy, the most complete, the most perfect, the most realistic form of worship. Liturgy is *par excellence* the form of worship appropriate to covenanted religion. One moment's reflection will make it clear to the least observant that there is something profoundly characteristic in the acts of the Catholic religion ; for not only do we admit, in every conceivable form and way, all the things which God has done for us, all that He is in Himself ; but we do something more : we make use of some of those divine realities, we touch them, we treat them as talents that have been given to us that we may make them multiply. There is in Catholic Liturgy acknowledgement of the divine to the extent of acting the divine ; and this is worship in its highest potency. To make it more clear still, we not only adore the Word made Flesh, but we eat the adorable Body of the Son of God, and in eating It we adore more truly than ever. Our Lady's Canticle is a classical instance of a worship that has become actually Liturgy.

" And Mary said : My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid : for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me : and holy is his name." (Luke i, 46-49.)

In these words we have the glorious assertion of the things done by God, and we also know what is meant when the holiest of maidens says " He that is mighty hath done great things to me ;" the fruit of her own bosom is the object of her worship.

There is in Liturgy a sense of possession, a feeling of certainty, a note of triumph and victory which need not essentially be found in worship in its more general aspect as an act of religion. The reason of this specific temper of Liturgy is not far to seek : we have there above all things the remembrance of that pact which God has made with us in Christ Jesus ; for Liturgy is peculiarly the celebration by the Church of the mysteries of the Covenant :

" Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (I Cor. iv, 1.)

A dispensing of the mysteries of God is indeed the very act of Liturgy ; and those mysteries of God are nothing else than the treasures of

salvation that constitute the new and everlasting Covenant. If our religious worship were devoid of that element of remembrance concerning a great Testament it would not differ from natural religion, from the universal feeling of worship, except through the additional object of the Incarnate God. That is to say : with all men we should adore God, but we should have this additional act of religion that we should adore also the God Incarnate. But Christian worship is more, infinitely more ; it has at its disposal spiritual realities never dreamed of before, it has an economy, a dispensation with which it is active in a mode which worship, simply so-called, could never emulate ; besides revering the Father, the Christian, through the new Covenant, possesses his Father's wealth. The forgetfulness of that special feature of Christian Liturgy is the beginning of secularism inside the Church ; it very soon makes religion a merely natural recognition of a higher Being. Such an ending would indeed be disastrous, would be a catastrophe beyond words for human souls. So we see the Catholic Church guarding most jealously her Liturgy and making of her worship a celebration of the mysteries of God in the sense of divine treasures committed to her charge and activities.

The province proper to Liturgy is among those supreme realities which we have enumerated,

imperfectly indeed, in our chapter on the riches of the Covenant. Here I have to make a distinction the importance of which cannot be exaggerated for the comprehension of the complete Catholic worship. The mystery of Christ has a two-fold aspect, it is a mystery of history and a mystery of Covenant. Christ's career in all its phases is an adorable thing which the Church remembers in her festivals ; events have taken place at given dates which have truly infinite worth and dignity because they are the acts of the God Incarnate. The Birth of Christ, the Baptism of Christ, the Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ are historical happenings, with definite dates ; they are holy events which the Church commemorates with boundless joy and gratitude. In themselves, however, and considered as events only, though they may be the object of worship they could not constitute a Liturgy, properly so-called, for this latter we need the covenanted mystery of Christ. The Birth, Baptism, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ—to point out the summits only of the mountain of God—have left in the spiritual world a permanent, unalterable reality ; call it a grace, call it a victory, call it a kingdom, it matters little ; the root idea is the same. The events of the Christ-career are things that are still with us in a permanent effect of a mysterious

nature, as I have explained in a previous chapter. Now Liturgy is specifically concerned with that province of the Christ-mystery. Through it there is constituted that profoundly original form of religion which we call Catholicism. We do much more than remember and assert the great thing which God has done for us ; we affirm in most emphatic manner the existence, the presence of a spiritual order of forces which come from Christ's life and which are always with us. This is commonly expressed in a phrase dear to the Liturgist : that in celebrating the Christian festivities we not only remember a past event and admit the influence of that past event on the world, but we enter into the very grace it has left behind, which remains for ever and which can never be driven away from this world by men's iniquities because the sacred incident has changed for ever the conditions of heaven and earth :

"That he might make known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in him, In the dispensation of the fulness of times, to re-establish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth, in him." (Eph. i, 9, 10.)

We must take it for granted that the coming of Christ through His Conception in the Virgin's womb, through His Nativity, through His Epiphany, through His Baptism in the Jordan,

has raised up the status of the human race for ever. In her great Litanies the Church appeals to those events as to permanent causes for God to look upon us graciously : *Per adventum tuum, Te rogamus audi nos.* But it is less clearly defined in what way those sacrosanct happenings have left behind them a continuous sanctification. As an instance of these rather indefinite yet certain upliftings of all things in Christ, the Fathers love to speak of that contact of our Lord's spotless Body with the waters of Jordan as having the power of sanctifying all water for baptismal regeneration. Catholic Liturgy has its feelings as well as its definitions, and there is in the Christian people an abiding sense that in the celebration of each step in the forward march of the One who goes forth like a giant, we are actually moving along with Him through glorious spheres of grace, and that we are not simply looking back to the regions whence He started.

With regard to those events in Christ's career which are called His life's consummation, the Passion, the Death and the Resurrection, we are more completely instructed and more definite things have been revealed to us. It is for theologians to define in what relation the pacific events of Christ's life—the events in which there is no effusion of Blood—stand to the terrific deeds which meant the out-pouring of His life Blood ;

it is not a very clear or well understood point of theology. In a general way it is stated that whatever preceded the effusion of Blood received in it its consummation, its perfection, its finality : it could be said that all the sanctities which precede the Sacrifice of the Cross are truly the sanctification, nay, the divine ornament of the holy Victim of the supreme Sacrifice. One thing, however, is certain in Catholic thought ; we know much concerning that spiritual estate, that world of light and liberty which was created by the fact of Christ's Death and Resurrection : it is, we might say, Redemption considered absolutely. I have said enough on that subject to hold myself dispensed from the task of elaborating it further ; but this I want to emphasise here, that the wonderful mystery of Redemption, considered absolutely, is the proper home of Liturgy. The note of triumph which is essential to Catholic worship is a mighty cry that God has redeemed the world. This is the great shout of Alleluia which S John heard coming down from heaven and which is the burden of all the liturgical canticles of the Church :

" The four living creatures and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb. . . And they sung a new canticle, saying : Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof : because thou wast slain and

hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation : And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests. And we shall reign on the earth." (Apoc. v, 8-10.)

To celebrate the mystery of Christ's redemptive act merely as an historical event is certainly no full explanation of the Church's attitude. Even the desire and the effort to have a share in the fruits of the Redemption does not give a perfect clue to the Church's temper ; there is more, there is the celebration of Redemption in its absolute meaning, as an ever-present, omnipresent reality which creates a mentality in the Church which is truly consummate religious genius.

The coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost may be considered as the most clearly defined liturgical element in Christianity. In it we celebrate primarily, at every recurrence of the fiftieth day after Easter, the memory of what happened in Jerusalem on that great morning as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles. But it is so evident that in the coming of the Spirit we are dealing with a much more permanent reality that even the least liturgically-minded must make a profound distinction between the commemoration of the historic fact and the celebration of an actuality ; for the Spirit is always with us, He has not gone

away, His coming is as actual to-day as it was when Peter rose and spoke to the multitude. So we have Liturgy there in the very act of dealing with a present reality : the Church celebrates the Spirit that is hers as one entertains a guest who has come and who stays. " The Spirit and the bride say : Come." (Apoc. xxii, 17.) It is not to the Spirit that the bride says, " Come " : He is always with her ; the invitation is to Christ, to return to the earth which He has left. Where could we find a religion thus refined, thus supreme in her grasp of spiritual powers? Christianity is not a sighing after the Spirit ; this would imply distance. It is not a mere prostration before the Lord of Glory ; it is an ineffable presence ; it is a firm hold on God Himself. This is the new way of worship ; this is that adoration which the Father seeks in them that worship Him.

" The hour cometh and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore him. God is a spirit : and they that adore him must adore him in spirit and in truth." (John iv, 23, 24.)

Presence of the divine, and yet again, presence ; such is the supreme quality of perfect Christian worship, and the word for it is " Liturgy."

It is in this that the Church has shown to the fullest extent her talent of expressing the divine things. The history of her Lord's life has been couched by the Evangelists in language truly inimitable ; she has only to remember the phrases in which the greatest of all careers has been described by those who were either the eye-witnesses or their disciples. But to show forth in words, in rites, the sense she has within herself of the divine victory of the Redemption—that is the Church's own art. Liturgical expression of the traditional type is indeed a wonder of the human mind ; to preserve its purity is more than an æsthetical love of what is archaic ; it is a true zeal for the purity of the faith.

VIII

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

NOTHING is easier to demonstrate than the connexion between the Eucharistic mystery and the new Covenant in Christ. The words of the institution of the Eucharist leave no doubt as to the existence of this essential and intimate relationship :

" Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many." (Matt. xxvi, 27, 28.)

" And they all drank of it. And he said to them : This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many." (Mk. xiv, 23, 24.)

" This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you." (Luke xxii, 20.)

" This chalice is the new testament in my blood. This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me." (I Cor. xi, 25.)

" For this is the chalice of my blood of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith." (Canon of Mass.)

I put together these texts, the most sacred words in all human language. Their lapidary simplicity leaves no doubt as to the profound identification there is between the Eucharist and the new Covenant. To complete the impression let me quote also the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews :

" And therefore he is the mediator of the new testament : that by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament the death of the testator must of necessity come in. For a testament is of force after men are dead : otherwise it is as yet of no strength, whilst the testator liveth. Whereupon neither was the first indeed dedicated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been read by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop : and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people saying : This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." (Heb. ix, 15-20.)

I do not apologise for the long extract from the Epistle as I want the reader to gain a conviction which is based on the rock of the inspired language that Blood must enter into

the making of a Covenant between God and man. The most remarkable passage in this connexion is to be found in the thirteenth chapter of this same Epistle to the Hebrews :

" And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the blood of the everlasting testament, fit you in all goodness." (Heb. xiii, 20.)

Here we seem to possess in one and the same sentence an allusion to the Blood of the Testament in its two-fold mode of being, the natural Blood of the Cross and the Eucharistic Blood of the risen Christ. To insinuate that in these passages we are dealing in metaphors would be extremely perilous for Christian dogma. So without any further elaboration let us be satisfied with this great truth, this mystery of the faith, that we possess in all reality on our altars the Blood of the new and everlasting Covenant.

The Eucharist can be studied from more angles than one, though, of course, ultimately all our meditations on it are merged, like so many concentric rays, into one point. Here, following up the exigencies of my theme, I intend to approach the mystery of the Christian altar from the point of view of the new Covenant, and by doing so I hope to be able to give of

the Eucharist a presentment which is not partial only, but integral, and which will confirm what I have written elsewhere on the same subject.

The first consideration that forces itself on our attention is this : without exception it is the Blood, it is the Cup that stands for the Covenant, the Bread that is blessed and broken is never mentioned in connexion with the Covenant. The Epistle to the Hebrews also makes Blood and Covenant inseparable ; but this is merely a particular application of the more universal practice of the writers of the New Testament to attribute Redemption, the victory over sin, the triumph of the Church, to the Blood of Christ. This constant mode of attribution, this most fixed method of making the Blood of Christ the divine instrument of man's renewal and salvation, cannot be without its deep significance. A simple quotation of texts will suffice, as I am a great believer in the power of the Scriptures to create an impression through their own limpidness and simplicity.

" Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts xx, 28.)

"Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to the shewing of his justice, for the remission of former sins." (Rom. iii, 25.)

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i, 7.)

"But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off: are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. ii, 13.)

"And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of his cross." (Col. i, 20.)

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix, 14.)

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ." (I Pet. i, 18, 19.)

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John i, 7.)

"Jesus Christ . . . who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Apoc. i, 5.)

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. xii, 11.)

"Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. xxii, 14.)

At no time is the Body of Christ or the Flesh of Christ mentioned thus directly and explicitly as the instrument of the supreme triumph over sin. Christ is said to have condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. viii, 3); to have reconciled man in the Body of His flesh through death (Col. i, 22); to have sanctified us by the oblation of His Body (Heb. x, 10); to have dedicated a new and living way through His Flesh (Heb. x, 20); to have borne our sins in His own Body on the tree (I Pet. ii, 24); and yet there is never with regard to Christ's Body or His Flesh that finality of efficacy which is attached by the inspired writers to the Blood. The texts containing the mention of Christ's Body or Flesh give us to understand that these were, so to speak, the abode of that tremendous mystery of the Redemption: from that Body issues forth the Blood, and it is that sacrosanct Blood which is Redemption consummated, which is the supreme power before which everything yields. When therefore Blood is made so specifically the attribute of the Covenant we are not departing from New Testament thought, but we remain in the very heart of it. What,

then, is the theological significance of this identification of Blood and Covenant? Shall we say, with so many moderns, that these things have no final value, that they are the phrases of a lower religious mentality, that the spiritual value contained in them, and to a certain extent hidden by them, might be expressed more perfectly in terms of ethical acts? Are we to allow that when Christ and His Apostles couched their deepest concept in terms of Blood they were really making a concession to Jewish habits of mind? Of course such interpretation would not only be arbitrary but would leave us without any certainty in this supreme matter of our spiritual fortunes. The Hellenistic portions of the New Testament are as full of the literature of the Blood as the more Judaic parts. We have no means of knowing what we ought to substitute for the term Blood, and in fact, no one has suggested any such substitute. So let us accept the Scriptures literally, with the conviction that for the Christian people there is no other way of mentally visualising the mystery of the Redemption than the divinely framed phrases which speak of the Blood of the Covenant.

But why the Blood of the Covenant? Is not the Covenant a thing that stands by itself? How does the Covenant find in Blood firmness and sanctity? The answer is in the texts we have

quoted. The victory of God over evil has been achieved through this human, historic fact that the Son of God shed His Blood on the Cross : His Blood was most truly the instrument of that marvellous piece of divine power and divine wisdom. So, wherever the Blood of Christ is, there is also the Covenant in all its reality and vitality. To have the Blood of Christ is to have full possession of the Covenant, or, as S Paul puts it : " Where there is death the testament is of force." Man succeds to all the wealth of the Covenant through the Death of Christ, which is essentially effusion of Blood :

" For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come." (I Cor. xi, 26.)

The Eucharistic drinking is a showing forth of the Death of Christ and therefore the divine Will becomes operative, we enter into our inheritance. Testament, Blood, Death—or better still, Death through the effusion of Blood—and inheritance, these are the pivotal ideas, not only of the Pauline theology but also of that of the whole New Testament. To find other language and other terms to state the mystery would be a hopeless task ; it has pleased the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the incomprehensible fact of our salvation in such words; to

empty them of their meaning, to eviscerate and impoverish them, can only lead to a theological vacuum.

We have, therefore, three most evident theological conclusions: firstly, the Blood of Christ and only that Blood, shed in its natural condition on the Cross, is said to be the Blood of the new Covenant, and this quite emphatically, without any hesitation. If allusion is made to the ritual blood that entered into the dedication of the Old Testament, it is merely a further emphasis of a mystery that is complete in itself. Secondly, this same Blood of Christ, in its sacramental condition is again said to be the Blood of the new Covenant, and this exclusively, without there being a parallel quality in the Eucharistic Body. Thirdly, this identification between Blood and Covenant, both on the Cross and on the Christian altar, is fully in conformity with the whole New Testament mode of speech which makes the Blood of Christ the specific price and proper instrument of man's Redemption.

It is evident from all this that, in the Eucharistic mystery the Cup, the Blood of the Lord, is not only an indispensable part, but is the most characteristic part, because through it, in sacramental significance and meaning, that thing is rendered present whose presence is for

us of supreme importance, namely, the Death of the Lord in a mystery. Through that Death on the Cross, in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we become the heirs of the Covenant in that general and absolute way which is proper to the redemptive work of the Cross. On the Christian altar, through that same Blood we enter individually into our inheritance, into the Covenant, because sacramentally and mystically there is the Death of the Lord as His Blood is poured out. The Eucharistic sacrifice cannot be separated from the theology of the Covenant; it is a sacrifice which is essentially the Chalice of the new Testament in Christ's Blood. To eliminate the Cup, the Blood of Christ, from the Eucharistic mystery would be the destruction of the sacrifice, because the element of the Covenant would necessarily be eliminated, the idea of death would be eliminated, and thus all relationship with Calvary would come to an end.

Having now established the dogmatic position of the Blood of the new Covenant, let us dwell a moment longer on the glorious implications of Christ's pregnant and omnipotent saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new Testament." What we said in the chapter on Liturgy gains here a realism unsuspected before Christ spoke such words.

In the celebration of the blessed Eucharist we have the Covenant brought home to us in the very element that, so to speak, is the mother of that Covenant, the Blood of Christ; we have the water in which is born the precious pearl; we have reached the shores of that ocean from which the new world emerged. To hold the Cup of that Blood as we do in the sacrifice of the Catholic altar is the most solemn, most drastic, most realistic assertion of the superb fact that we are redeemed in Christ and that we believe in our Redemption. The Christian Chalice is the most perfect symbol of the greatest of all victories. Christian art had true insight when it gave to the statue representing the Church the Cup as the great emblem of her rule over souls. To drink of it abundantly, freely, as sons and daughters drink of the wine that is on the table of their father on a festive day, is the natural way for us to enter into participation of all the riches of the Covenant; this is, as we all know, Liturgy at its highest. When Christ invariably qualifies His Blood as "the Blood of the new Testament" in His Eucharistic style, He does more than merely describe the splendours of that holy Blood, He points to an office, not only to a quality; this Blood is an active power, bringing about in the Church and in souls the full effects of the new Testament.

As sacramental Blood it is the Blood of the Covenant being Blood poured out sacramentally, for it is an old conclusion of theology that the words which Christ uses in the Eucharistic institution are true then and there, concerning what is happening at that precious moment. Who could have any doubts as to the supreme rôle in the Christian Dispensation of the notion of a Covenant, which the Eucharist itself seems to be given to us as a minister of the Covenant? when the Blood of the Lamb unspotted is put at our disposal so that none of us be tempted to hesitate whether or not he is entitled to approach the Covenant, to enter into it? Two of the texts quoted in this chapter strike one afresh :

" But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. ii, 13.)

" And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the blood of the everlasting testament, fit you in all goodness, that you may do his will." (Heb. xiii, 20.)

Here S Paul seems to speak of the Blood of Christ as a universally recognised power which brings us to Christ. Such language is typical in orthodox Christianity, the Blood of Christ as shed on Calvary, as shed on the Christian

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altar, is an absolute spiritual quantity ; through it we have access to Christ first, and through Him to the Father and to everything that is holy in heaven and on earth ; we have been admitted to " Jesus the mediator of the new testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel." (Heb. xii, 24.)

As this chapter is not specifically a treatise on the Eucharist I am not bound to give a full explanation of a point which my observations may have raised in some minds : what is the relationship between the Body and the Blood in the Eucharistic mystery? It may suffice to indicate that the two elements are indispensable to the integrity and full meaning of the Eucharistic mystery. Without the Body, the Blood would lack that profound signification of being poured forth from a living Body ; without the Blood the Body would miss the signification of being offered up or immolated, as its offering and immolation was essentially the pouring forth of its life Blood. The two mysteries make one. We can no more separate them than we can separate life and blood in the natural organism. Though the Eucharistic Body be worshipped more constantly in the Reservation of the Tabernacle, this is, of course, quite accidental, being brought about by the simple fact that the

consecrated Wine could not be preserved so easily. Similar considerations would be applicable to Communion by the laity under the one Kind. These accidental things do not touch the unalterable facts of the central Eucharistic mystery which is essentially a celebration of the new Covenant in the Blood of Him who is made "a surety of a better testament." (Heb. vii, 22.)

IX

THE BOND OF THE COVENANT

THE Covenant which God has made with man would not be sufficiently expressed in terms of gifts and promises, of spiritual provisions and special providences ; there is another essential element which belongs to the Covenant and without which the divine pact would be a unilateral thing merely, a divine arrangement without a corresponding obligation on the part of man. The Covenant is an alliance between God and man ; it is a peace concluded between divine Justice and the sinner ; it is a friendship between the Creator and His creature ; and if man were not thus united with his Maker there would be no true Covenant. Between God and man there is a bond, and without that bond the Testament would not exist. One word, in the amplitude of its significance, renders that supreme and indispensable condition of the divine pact, the element of alliance, of peace, of friendship, the word is Charity, which according to S Paul is " the bond of perfection," that is to say, the complete, perfect bond.

That friendship between God and man belongs to a Covenant appears from the privilege of Abraham who was called the friend of God :

" Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him to justice, and he was called the friend of God." (James ii, 23.)

The Christian doctrine of Charity would be without a foundation if there had not been a true Covenant between God and man in Christ Jesus. Charity is essentially the attitude of the human mind and the human will which comes from the fact of the society into which God has entered with us through the new Covenant. Charity is the ethos of that divine alliance. What God does in Charity and what man does in Charity is directly the result of the union which has been brought about by this pact, this Covenant. Charity is not itself the Covenant but it is its very life, its manners, its behaviour, its spirit. Just as two nations who have concluded a treaty have to develop a conduct and a mentality towards each other without which the alliance would be a mere fiction, so likewise that higher pact of the Covenant begets its proper and exclusive sympathy and confidence between the Creator and those whom He has made.

No doubt it could be said that the Covenant and Charity are one and the same thing, are two different terms for one reality. It is true that

Charity is so intimately and so completely the very life of the Covenant that it is not necessary always to distinguish between the two ; but it is also evident that Covenant and Charity stand to each other in the relationship of the riches covenanted for and the Spirit in which the Covenant will be carried out. Charity therefore, whether created or uncreated, is to be considered as a quality of the mind which makes the great alliance a thing of truth and happiness. One might almost say that Charity is the divine safeguard of that treaty of friendship of which we speak, as through it man remains in such dispositions as will make him the fit ally of God for all eternity. As an enmity that springs up between two peoples who were united through some treaty of peace kills that alliance ; so likewise, in a much vaster measure, the absence of Charity frustrates the Covenant of its effects towards the individual man. It stands to reason, of course, that on the part of God there is never any interruption or cessation of Charity ; He loves His Church with an everlasting Charity ; He never breaks His Covenant nor does He adopt thoughts of hatred which would make the pact of peace and friendship a thing of falsehood. Nor could a complete cessation of Charity be ever ascribed to the Church on earth ; there is always the holy Remnant with whom the mystery of

Christ is alive and true. Charity, through the power of divine grace, is never extinct in the Church, though Christians, even in large numbers, may fall away from its grace either transiently or permanently. In a very true sense they are the enemies of God whilst they are in that sad state; they do not possess that disposition of mind which is the congenital spirit of the Covenant.

It is evident that Charity, in the classical and technical Christian sense of the term, is a quality of the Spirit which is entirely divine in its origin and which is something as original, as completely *sui generis,* as the other elements of the Covenant. We cannot speak of Charity unless there be an alliance or society with God as the centre of it or the partner of it. To speak of Charity and to exclude the notion of fellowship with God would be, of course, sheer nonsense.

"That which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you: that you also may have fellowship with us and our fellowship may be with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (I John i, 3.)

Nor would it be more rational to speak of Charity towards man unless we presuppose man's fellowship with God and the fellowship of men among themselves through that prior association with God. Those things are against

Charity which sever that relationship, but as long as it remains firm there is no sin against Charity. The perfection of that union is the perfection of the Christian soul ; if there be nothing to hinder the soul from entering into full fellowship, such a soul is in a state of complete sanctity ; nothing in this world or the next can hurt it :

" But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another : and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John i, 7.)

There is in the theological literature of Catholicism concerning Charity a vastness of speech which is not the same thing as vagueness. Charity is the queen of all virtues ; Charity covers a multitude of sins ; an act of Charity is tantamount to a direct and immediate admission to heaven, if man die in that same blessed disposition ; all other virtues derive their merit from Charity ; the worth of an ethical act is not so much its difficulty as the amount of Charity that informs it. Such phrases, as we all know, are current in Catholic literature. If we had to analyse their contents and give a full account of their meaning we might feel perplexed, yet we never hesitate to accept them as complete verities. The fact is that we all know that in Charity we possess a divine virtue, which is essentially a gift, and which, in a mysterious

but most real way, binds us with all other faithful Christians to Christ and makes us full partakers in the merits of His Redemption.

This vastness of concept concerning Charity is very striking in S Paul's famous description of it. The Apostle never defines it though he speaks of it as of a possession in comparison of which all other gifts are as nothing ; he gives some of its practical manifestations, but he is careful not to leave it on earth as a mere goodness of will amongst men. It is the same thing as the clear Vision of God in its full development, when man shall know God even as he is known to Him. Immediate fellowship with God always has to be the last word in this matter of Charity.

It is easy, therefore, to understand the intimate connexion between the new and everlasting Covenant and Charity :

" God is Charity : and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him." (I John iv, 16.)

The simple truth the ethical perfection of Christianity is reduced to this concept of the perfect union of man with God and with his fellow-men in God is perhaps becoming hard for us to grasp. Yet if man has achieved this he has accomplished all righteousness, all other things are as nothing. If, on the contrary, he

has performed all the other just deeds and neglected this one, his life has been useless and his soul barren. All the efforts of the Catholic Church in her practical spirituality must be towards the development of Charity. If there be peace with God, if there be peace among the brethren, all of which means Charity, the treasures of the Covenant are spread out, and there is no stinting :

"Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom." (Luke vi, 38.)

Many minds are so constituted ethically that it is only the hard and difficult thing, the arduous task, that appears to them as having moral worth, truly so-called. They cannot see how a simple surrender of the will to a supernatural society could be something great. Yet if Christianity means anything it means this : our sanctity is in our union, not in our efforts. Efforts are sanctity only so far as they are put at the service of that higher thing, union ; and by this I mean, of course, fellowship with God and fellowship with our brethren.

It is one of the difficulties that besets the writer on this tremendous subject, Charity, to be dealing with a reality that embraces heaven and earth, which at one time seems to be identical with the life of God Himself, and at another is

said to consist in the practice of the most humble virtues and the sweet ordering of daily domesticities. That Charity should have so wide an area of influence is not surprising, just as it is not surprising that the universal law of gravitation should be true in the case of the apple that falls from the tree as well as with the planet that moves in space. As Charity is the power of union, everything that may in any way bring about division, separation, disunion, is against Charity, whether it be a world war or an unruly temper in the domestic circle. For this reason Catholic moralists consider every kind of sin to be, if not a breach of Charity, certainly an impediment thereto, as sin always implies some selfishness either of the flesh or of the spirit that isolates and separates man from the fellowship of the saints.

It is indeed a superb thing in the ethical order that our life of purity and rectitude, of mercy and justice, is brought within that concentric force of Charity ; that in all the things we do in virtue we contribute towards a vaster scheme of sanctity, we are united with all the elect, we are made to move with them towards the fountainhead of all love, God :

" Doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even

Christ: From whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity." (Eph. iv, 15, 16.)

The expression "doing truth in charity" is in itself a most accurate description of all Catholic life and is another rendering of the thought I have tried to bring out in this chapter. Truth stands for all the objective facts of the divine Dispensation, the new Covenant. It is "the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (*ibid.* 13.) To carry out that divine programme is the business of Christian sanctity; to live for those high truths, to "do" them through every possible mode of activity and worship is the business of the Kingdom of heaven. But we are not the possessors of those great facts, of those mighty truths in an isolated and merely personal way; if we are the elect of God we have innumerable fellow-elect, and to do the things of the Covenant with joyfulness of heart and sincerity of love in the company of our brethren is indeed the greatest of all arts; it is "doing the truth in charity."

X

SACRAMENTAL STABILITY

MY readers will expect me to say something on the Church's Sacraments in a book which makes it its purpose to describe the Covenant of the new Dispensation. Every Catholic knows instinctively that in the Sacraments we possess spiritual powers and supernatural realities which differ from all other aspects of divine grace through their covenanted character. In the Sacraments we are not only dealing with divine promises of whose certainty we are so absolutely convinced that any doubt concerning their realisation would be a denial of our Catholicism, we have more than promises, we have institution of a most definite kind, with a material side and an external expression so evident that we speak of them with as much assurance as of some great monument that has been preserved through the ages. It is evident that the scope of this book forbids an exhaustive study of sacramental theology, though the attraction to enter deeply into it is very strong.

In the Sacraments the new and eternal Testament in the Blood of Christ is shown forth with a clearness that is truly astonishing. The loyal perseverance with which the Church has kept her faith in the Sacraments is indeed a fact of supreme interest in the history of religious thought ; it is the chief badge of her Catholicism.

Periodically man becomes more self-conscious ; he wants to have the great business of spirituality in his own hands ; he becomes impatient with fixed and ready-made instruments of salvation. Æsthetical ages as well as intellectual ages never tend to sacramental theology ; nay, even the mystic is inclined to look upon sacramental sanctification as an inferior grade of grace, not to be compared with the splendours of the divine Presence in the mystical contact with God. It is truly a thing to be wondered at that through all the proud evolutions of the human spirit sacramental faith has remained so constant in the Catholic Church.

I think I shall do this paramount subject sufficient justice if I make a special study here of sacramental stability; not in the historical sense to which allusion has just been made, that Sacraments have survived all the rebellions of the human mind, but in the strictly theological meaning that the sacramental grace is a grace of wonderful stability.

SACRAMENTAL STABILITY

The theology of the Sacraments is an immense task, but the foremost impression left in the mind by the study of that vast subject is this : that the Sacraments produce effects which are permanent and even indestructible, so that we may truly speak of sacramental stability.

It may be laid down as a general principle that Sacraments are divine powers which work divinely and which cannot be cheated of their effects unless certain obstacles be placed in the path of their activities. We all know that, with some of the Sacraments at least, there is necessary on the part of man, not exactly a co-operation but a disposition which renders him a fit recipient of the sacramental grace. If that disposition is absent the Sacrament does not produce its effect, just as light does not pass through an opaque body. Theologians call this frustration of the sacramental effect "*ponere obicem,*" placing an obstacle in the way. This is a fine expression which contains a world of theological wisdom. In the acts of the personal, spiritual life we either do it or do not do it, we do good or we do evil ; in sacramental spirituality other terms have to be employed to state man's portion of responsibility : he is in himself an obstacle to the sacramental grace or he is no obstacle. The new-born child is no obstacle

to baptismal grace because he has no power to refuse it, but the new-born child before his Baptism is an obstacle to the grace, say, of the Spirit in Confirmation, as his original sin bars the door against the Holy Ghost as He would enter through Confirmation. This theology of the obstacle is truly a theology of the minimum because it regards sacramental action as a supreme power, and it looks upon man as a fit subject for the highest graces, provided that minimum of moral, physical, nay, material obstacle be removed which is incompatible with sacramental grace as a matter of natural, I might almost say, physical opposition. That *obex,* obstacle, is cut down by theologians to its lowest denominator and is reduced more and more according to the Sacrament. Thus in Baptism nothing is an obstacle, even in the adult, to the essential effect of Baptism, that of giving to the soul its Christian character and status, provided the adult be willing to receive Baptism ; but through perseverance in personal sin an obstacle is put in man which prevents the coming of sanctifying grace in Baptism ; this of course could not be otherwise. Yet the moment there is in man any turning away from sin, the grace that was merely delayed at the reception of Baptism, rushes into the soul.

No article of theology has been treated so extensively, with such complete appreciation of all the issues, as this stability of the baptismal grace. S Augustine positively revelled in the treatment of the subject; for very early in the Church's history it became a matter of urgency to decide the value of Baptism, not only as administered, but as received by the sinner and the heretic. It is the mighty controversy about baptising and re-baptising. The Roman Church, and with it Augustine in Africa, fought heroically for the validity of Baptism *in se*. Baptism is not the act of man but the act of Christ; even sinful man cannot withhold himself from the effects of the act of Christ if he has a sincere intention of receiving Baptism, though his soul be not completely transformed he yet must admit the imprint of Christ's hand upon it. The Church has always lived in the faith that sacramental power is really the power of Christ, that the human minister is Christ's instrument, Christ's tool. This transcendence of the omnipotence of Christ in the sacramental order is such an essentially Catholic notion that it has become a stumblingblock to many. Yet S Paul's apostrophe to the Corinthians who were too much inclined to follow the merely personal excellency in the Christian minister remains the classical text:

"Is Christ divided? Was Paul then crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul?" (I Cor. i, 13.)

Christ's Death on the Cross is the fundamental cause of the sacramental grace; Christ's power is the only executive power in those mysterious regenerations of man's soul, the sacramental graces; everything else is entirely ministerial, instrumental, ancillary, even such free acts of man in the Sacrament as are indispensable to its validity. It is not surprising, therefore, that the profounder forms of Catholic theology contain views and theories about the stability of sacramental grace which may seem perplexing to the superficial thinker. It is immensely more important for the Church that sacramental stability be preserved than that dissidents, heretics, schismatics, should be punished. In days of acrid religious hostilities, when the rebel is a thorn in the side of the Church, the temptation might be great on the part of the orthodox to declare that heterodoxy kills sacramental grace; that heretics and schismatics cannot possibly claim the privilege of having valid Sacraments; that their Baptisms, their Eucharists, their Orders, are empty formulæ because they are in opposition to the Church; that it would be almost tantamount to blasphemy to maintain that the breaker of the Church's

unity has the power of Christ still remaining with him when he performs the sacramental rites.

Now the Church of Rome, the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, has never succumbed to such a temptation ; against all enemies she has defended the validity and reality of the Sacraments whenever Christians have been faithful in the use of those rites, of those words, which constitute the sacramental reality, which are, in theological language, the matter and the form of the Sacrament, those things, and those words, those ceremonies and those formulas which are of divine and apostolic institution.

Here, then, we have institutionalism in religion brought home to us with overpowering boldness. However low the form of Christianity may be, however far a Christian sect may find itself from the splendours of truth which radiate around the tomb of Peter, its Sacraments, if faithfully observed, are divine things. It is better for the Roman Church to profess her faith in the inextinguishable efficacy of Sacraments than to pronounce her enemies, her deserters, to be sacramentally disinherited.

This is only one aspect of the Church's faith in sacramental stability. Inside the Church herself, as was to be expected, this permanence of the sacramental power is a thing of glory, of

triumph and of comfort for the souls of the elect. We cannot, of course, follow the Sacraments in all their workings ; none of us has spiritual vision keen enough for those wonderful radiations of the sacramental grace through the length and depth of human life. Such grace goes far beyond the human act, far beyond human conscipusness, and, of course, far beyond human merit ; it transcends time ; it is more than a claim on the part of man to privileged treatment ; it is like a supernatural ether which works even when it is deflected in its course ; in one word, in sacramental theology we must make of divine action the primary thing and of human action the secondary. We know, it is true, and we are repeatedly told by the Church that much depends for the fruitfulness of the sacramental grace on the fervour of our approach to the Sacrament. I would be the very last to minimise the importance of that portion of Catholic theology. The ardour of the individual soul enlarges its capacity for sacramental grace, but it is not the direct cause or the efficacious cause of the sacramental grace ; such a causality must be sought, once for all, in the power of Christ who works on souls immediately through the instrumentality of His Sacraments.

Sacramental theology, more than anything else in Catholicism, makes it clear to us that the

new Covenant is not a thing for the few, but a thing for the many ; that the Son of God came to save not the just, but sinners. It is only God who could thus put at man's disposal a treasure so great, so holy as is the new Covenant, without fear that it should be contaminated by human contact.

When we consider, on the one hand, the sacredness of the Christian Sacraments and, on the other, man's almost unbounded license in his use of them, we feel that we are in the presence of either a great error or a great mystery, a mystery as great as Creation and Providence, as great as that Majesty of the Father who makes His sun to rise over the godly and the ungodly, who sends His rain on the field of the just and the unjust. That we are not the victims of a great illusion but the followers of a faith that is founded on the Apostles is evident from the fact already alluded to, that sacramental doctrines could not have survived the vicissitudes of the civilised mind if their certainty were not above all cavil and contradiction. The Sacraments have imposed themselves on the Christian consciousness with an insistence and a majesty which remind one of the great laws that rule the physical universe.

XI

FAITH IN CHRIST

WE may now make a study of that wonderful thing, the subjective faith in Christ as it is found in men. For as the deeper notion of a Covenant enters or does not enter into the composition of that faith there are profound differences in its quality. As a matter of fact nothing is more varied than the views which men have taken and are taking daily of Christ's Personality. If it were possible to make a complete anthology of all the things men have said of Christ, such an anthology would present a most bewildering picture. I am not thinking here of detractors, of enemies, of those who have blasphemed the Son of man; such literature of darkness would, on the whole, be very poor and monotonous ; the blasphemies against the Son of man are always the same and not of the least psychological interest; they are stereotyped expressions of the vulgar type of mind. We are now concerned with the things that have been said of Christ by His disciples in

all ages : for it is the disciple who makes the character and who writes the biography of the master, who expresses him and presents him to the world. Very few men can afford to have disciples, as the original character of the master is the one thing which disciples endanger through their fervour. It is only a type which is absolutely overpowering and of granite-like immutability that dare surrender itself, for all times to come, to the good pleasure of disciples. Christ has succeeded in doing this ; He always emerges above the favour of discipleship, He is greater than any disciple could ever make Him, though the disciples be loyal and faithful to Him even unto death.

When we bear in mind the Catholic teaching concerning Christ's mission we feel that we are dealing with a Personality which is infinitely beyond us and yet whose share in our existence is for us a question of life and death. We have constantly to reconcile two things in our faith in Christ : on the one hand we say of Him, in the words of S Paul : " I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me." (Gal. ii, 20.) On the other hand, again with S Paul, we say of Christ that God was in Him " Reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their sins." (II Cor. v, 19.) It is this combination of the most

individualistic with the most universal that makes the traditional and healthy faith in Christ. However intimately we hold Christ each one of us, we never forget that He is the glorious God whose Name is blessed for ever and whose power reaches from world's end to world's end.

It would seem that not all Christian generations have been equally happy in their practical grasp of these two terms of the Christ-mystery, the individual and the universal. It requires, indeed, a very strong tradition in order to express the mystery of the Son of God in ways that do complete justice to the fulness of Christ. We know, of course, that as long as the Catholic holds, as he always does hold, that Christ is the Son of God, is God without any limitation, his Christology is orthodox. Whatever may be the intensity of his human love of Christ, whatever may be the charm of the human integuments with which his imagination clothes Christ, he has always, at the back of his mind, that faith which is more than theoretical, that Christ is the Son of God. With this great theological fixture, which is like the anchor of the ship of his faith, the Catholic is free to follow to their utmost possibilities all the variations of Christ's human presentment.

There is, however, for the complete understanding of Christian life, the necessity for each

one of us to be familiarised with those aspects of the Christ-Personality which are transcendent and which alone give to Catholicism its full meaning ; we must move under the never-setting sun of Christ's supreme rôle of Redeemer of mankind. Whatever personal devoutness there may be in each one of us towards Christ it is a small matter compared with that faith which sees in Him the Word that was made Flesh, who has the glory of Only Begotten of the Father. It is not an anomaly, it is simply Christian faith, that we know that the Christ whom we love, though He be everything to us, is yet something infinitely greater than that. All Christian generations have tried, and to a very great extent have succeeded in the attempt to find in the Son of God a personal Friend of whom they know, with a clearness of instinct that comes from God, that He is a Personality which transcends them immeasurably. The nature of Christ's redemptive work is a striking instance of this duality of the fathomable and the unfathomable in the Son of God, both of which aspects are permanently present to the consciousness of the Church. The acts and the sufferings of the redeeming Christ are clearly and definitely human acts and human sufferings, they are not even spirit-acts or spirit-sufferings in the technical sense of the word, for Christ

was not afflicted here on earth as a spirit may be afflicted, as, for instance, a soul in purgatory. Certainly there is nothing in the Gospels, there is nothing in Catholic tradition, which would justify us in reading into the history of Christ's Passion phenomena which were not human ; even the Agony in the Garden was a human agony though the comforter and consoler was an Angel ; the historic details of Christ's Passion and Death are enumerated with care and terseness by the Evangelists and we have no right to add to the story, to make Christ's judicial case worse than it was. In fact, to interfere with the human character of the acts and sufferings of Christ, to give them a super-human or even a non-human degree of intensity, is a most dangerous proceeding in theology. We should be abandoning the certain for the uncertain, the apparent for the recondite, the pattern of patience for the unattainable. To leave Christ's Passion its human value, its human standard, is a thing of primary importance in Christology. There is, however, the infinitely transcending, that one element which makes of Christ's human acts things that reach into infinitude. This infinitude is of a special kind ; the act is not infinite, the act is limited and measured, and yet infinitude belongs to it intrinsically and most immediately. To understand this with more or less clearness is

to be more or less perfect in the knowledge of Christ. More than one pious writer, with good intentions but deficient theology, has exaggerated the human intensity of the act, has conjugated it almost into the infinite, in order to give a satisfactory reason for that prodigious worth, Christ's sufferings. There is perhaps a certain type of mind which finds a difficulty in seeing values where there is no effort ; to such minds the theology of the Redemption will always be a sealed book, for the value of the redemptive act is not, primarily, an effort, but a state ; it is the static element of Hypostatic Union, the presence of the Godhead in Christ, that lends infinitude to the human acts of Christ. A S Francis of Assisi may melt in tenderness of love when he contemplates the suffering Christ ; but, being the illuminated saint he is, he knows that his own wonderful sympathy with the suffering Christ is no measure of the spiritual beauty of the Christ-act, there is something that transcends him. The effects of the Christ-act are not to be counted in the response of the human heart in love of Christ, they are to be reckoned in quantities for which there is no human measurement. The Redemption is more than man's surrender to the Redeemer : the Redemption is a fact which embraces heaven and earth, which is intangible, which is above

all intelligence, which weighs with God in a way which it is not possible for man to understand.

The theologian to-day has not a very enviable task even with his own friends. The huge preponderance of the humanistic view of things renders unpopular whatever is not of direct human application ; realities and values which are to be weighed in the scales of God are of no interest to the modern man ; the doctrines which are couched in the language of a divine jurisprudence are despised as non-psychological ; to say that Christ on the Cross paid a debt that was owing to divine justice is to provoke a smile of contempt. Not the squaring up of obscure accounts between frail mortality and infinite sanctity, but the beatings of the heart of Christ and the beatings of the hearts of men in response, that is Redemption to the modernist, who would tell us that to bring in the language of the counter when we treat of the beautiful things of the Redemption has been the achievement of an age whose whole mentality is repugnant to him.

The theologian in his turn might well ask from the humanist this question, whether it be wise to deliver up the Son of God to the psycho-analyst who will leave us nothing in the Son of God that we do not understand. How long could admiration for such a one last? Is it not necessary for man to have as Redeemer One

who is more than a moralist, who is more than a teacher, who is more even than a friend, who is a transcending Being, who is covenanted Sanctity? Is it not said, and truly so, that one generation of mankind is incapable of understanding any previous generation, that we cannot place ourselves in the milieu of our fathers, even, much less that of our grandfathers? We are so absorbed by ourselves that we read ourselves into every region of the past. If there were not in Christ the Redeemer the element that transcends humanity would He not become the victim of the moods of humanity, would not men make Him mercilessly into their own image and likeness, would they not make His redemptive work now this thing, now that? Instead of the Son of God who is "as lightning which cometh out of the east and appeareth even into the west" they would give us a Son of God who for some would be in the desert and for some others in the closets, with a mission entirely confined to the fancies of the time. The theologian, with his majestic and static dogmas of Christology, is still the best humanist, because his Christ, whilst doing a great human thing, is always greater than the thing which He does.

It will be helpful, I think, to give here a description of Christ which, though it may seem

novel, is after all an easy and almost superficial piece of applied theology. I want to divide the Christ-Person into what is *knowable* in Him and what is *unknowable*. I do not say—let the reader remark this—that my distinction is between the *known* and the *unknown* in Christ : such a distinction would be silly, as the unknown can never be part of an opposition of terms, from the very fact that it is unknown. By knowable and unknowable I mean those things in Christ which faith asserts of Him, which the Christian Church attributes to Him, but which, from their very nature, can sooner or later be apprehended by man or are beyond all possibility of comprehension. The real interest in such a distinction lies in the fact that both the knowable and the unknowable matter supremely in our Christology ; the unknowable even more than the knowable.

What, then, are the things which it is possible for man, either here on earth or in heaven, to see in Christ? What are the things of which man can partake as coming from Christ and the partaking whereof makes him consciously more happy? To begin with, the whole human life of Christ, the life He spent here on earth, seems to me to be attainable by man's mind. I consider that it is possible for man through the power of the divine grace and certainly through

the light of Beatific Vision to enter fully into the beauties of Christ's human behaviour, of Christ's motives of action, of Christ's sentiments : in familiar modern language, the Heart of Christ can reveal itself to us, its mysteries of love need not remain eternal secrets. We could know what Christ's prayer was here on earth, we could be told the reasons that made Him institute the Church, the Eucharist and the other Sacraments ; we could be told, in the spirit of revelation, every incident however small of His mortal life ; His intercourse with His blessed Mother, His temptations in the wilderness, nay, even the nature of the wrestlings of His spirit in the Garden of the Agony ; we could be made privy to the intimate sufferings of the Cross ; even what He felt in His Resurrection and His Ascension, prodigious as it all may be, is not beyond our comprehension ; the workings of His human mind if they were told us could be followed by our own thought. This is the knowable Christ. I repeat what I have already said, that for such knowledge I presuppose supernatural light in man, though not necessarily the light of Beatific Vision.

The advantage of the enumeration which I have already said, that for such knowledge I extent of the mystical possibilities in the Catholic Church, that true Christ-mysticism which

consists in being elevated to a participation both conscious and experimental in the life of Christ; it is an immense province of the supernatural, and one so lovely and so rich that it might seem at times that nothing more is wanted. This was the experience of S Paul who had found Christ so abundantly that everything else was a mere loss by comparison:

"Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ: And may be found in him, not having my justice, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ Jesus, which is of God: justice in faith. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings: being made conformable to his death. If by any means I may attain to the resurrection which is from the dead." (Phil. iii, 8-10.)

It is over these elements in the Christ-Personality that men have become enthusiastic; they have been wounded in their hearts by such supreme beauty, nay, they have even received in their bodies the stigmata of Christ's Passion. It is by no means adverse to the Catholic theology of Christ to admit that mystics may become conscious of any given period of His life

to an overpowering degree of realism ; in their rapts and ecstasies some Catholic seers have felt in themselves all the bitterness of the Passion ; other mystics may have been initiated into different portions of the human life of the Son of man. By the grace of God they are what they are, and that grace is not a vain thing, but is the power of Christ revealing Himself to them. Yet S Paul, who had found Christ so fully, still speaks of something which he has not attained :

" Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect : but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do : Forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii, 12-14.)

This is the triumph of the Christ-mysticism in its greatest upliftings ; it knows that it has not exhausted Christ.

Here, then, we come to the second element in the Christ-Personality, which is immensely greater, immensely more important, but which is unknowable, at least outside Beatific Vision. If it be permissible to make an enumeration of

things so tremendous I would suggest the following as the unknowable things of Christ, the existence of which is guaranteed by Christian dogma. Though most of these mysteries have already been referred to in the description of the riches of the new Covenant I am not guilty of repetition here, as now I am approaching the matter from the angle of our knowledge of Christ. First and foremost, there is the Hypostatic Union which does not enter into created consciousness, not even the created consciousness of Christ Himself outside His Beatific Vision, as I have already remarked. To make Christ's vocation and calling consist in this, that one day He received the consciousness of His Messiahship, which before He did not possess, has no meaning in Catholic theology : whatever Christ's consciousness was with regard to Hypostatic Union, it was with Him always and at all times. Secondly, Christ's High Priesthood will always transcend the sphere of the knowable ; it is the consecration of Christ by the Father Himself. Thirdly, the destruction of the guilt of sin by Christ's redemptive work is an unknowable mystery because it is a transaction between two divine Persons, the Son giving to the Father the glory which sin had taken from the Father. Fourthly, the election of men, their choice by Christ when He says :

"You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit." (John xv, 16.) As the fifth instance of the unknowable I should mention the Eucharistic mystery, both as a sacrifice and as the food of the soul. By the unfathomableness of the Eucharist I do not here mean the mystery of Transubstantiation and all it implies, this belongs properly to the sphere of God's creative power, not to the Christ-Personality; in the Eucharist there are more mysteries than the physical mysteries; what is unknowable is the power of propitiation that is in the Eucharistic sacrifice, a thing entirely beyond human experience; likewise the increase of grace which comes through the Eucharistic sacrament to the soul and to the Church transcends anything we can know.

It is the special privilege of the true Christian Dispensation to hold in reserve those mighty realities which here we describe as the unknowable things. We are under a Covenant that can never fail us; the Christian reconciliation between God and man is something so certain, something so universal, that no created terms can express it, that no mind left in the created sphere, I mean outside Beatific Vision, can grasp it. The habit of seeing supreme reality in those unknowable things is the finest act of the

Christian faith ; to appeal to those elements, as to glorious realities of inexhaustible importance, is the duty of every Christian preacher who is loyal to his mission. To appeal to sentiment, to appeal to experience, to appeal to human factors, is indeed a thing no Christian preacher can neglect, but to omit appeals to those higher truths would be to surrender more than half of our spiritual Kingdom. Unless the high things of the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union be in a way familiar to us the divine Motherhood of Mary loses all its majesty, and the Mother of God is nothing more to us than a charming human saint. If we are reluctant to leave it to God to choose His elect, to call us to Christ freely without any merit on our part as the basis of such a choice, we fall into the error of the mother of the Sons of Thunder, John and James, when she asked Christ that her sons should sit, the one at His right hand and the other at His left in the Kingdom of God. In a word, at every turn we should find Christian Dispensation to be an unmeaning thing if it had not elements which belong truly to the invisible God, elements that are not the intercourse between man and man nor between man and God, but the intercourse of the Incarnate God with His Father. This is full Christianity : to live in the faith, not only of the Son of God who loved us, but of the Son

of God who loved His Father and fulfilled His precept :

" That the world may know that I love the Father : and as the Father has given me commandment, so do I." (John xiv, 31.)

XII

THE CERTAINTIES OF CHRIST

THERE are two manifestations in the religious mentality of our own times which are symptomatic and which when analysed belong to the defence of the divine Covenant. One of these manifestations is found among the less orthodox writers on Christian things, whilst the other has its home in the more pietistic circles inside the Church. With the non-Catholic authors it is quite the fashion to make of the Son of God a struggler from darkness to light, one who has known the bitterness of doubt, one who has touched the miseries of the spirit but who has succeeded in emerging into complete serenity of mind. A Christ not thus tried in the spirit would not be, say they, a comforting pattern for man ; there would be no greatness in His serene consciousness of being the Son of God if He had not paid the price for that peace, if He had not struggled with doubts. To Catholic ears of course such a rendering of the

life of Christ sounds unorthodox; Christ has always been the Son of God, according to Catholic faith, and has always been conscious of His divine Sonship. There is, however, according to others, this thing that makes Him a sharer in our human conditions, Christ has failed on earth. This idea of failure in Christ's career has entered deeply into much of the pious literature of our own day and it is not too early for theologians to take this notion vigorously in hand and see to what extent such expressions are tenable. But for the moment I only mention the two tendencies as symptomatic of an age. To my thinking the two attitudes, though so different in orthodoxy, have at bottom, as so often happens, the same psychological basis: a preference for the incomplete, a love for the dramatic, an incapacity, at least relative, to appreciate the merit of the state of possession in the things of the Spirit.

I take first the non-Catholic theologians who, to a man, refuse to Christ the possession of all knowledge, of all light, of all certainty, in the sense that He possessed them from the very beginning of His life. That Christ had all wisdom, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and enjoyed the Vision of the Father in His human nature, are things which the Catholic Church has always taught; from their very nature they

cannot be proved otherwise than by revelation as they are things hidden in Christ. But we are concerned here more directly with the fact that Christ had certainty about Himself, His work, His future. Now this is a matter which can be verified through the Gospel narratives and to prove that Christ possessed such certainty belongs most directly to the scope of this book as we are examining here that aspect of Christianity which makes it the most stable and most secure of all religions, both in faith and practice, in other words, a true Covenant of God.

This certainty of Christ's outlook and of His behaviour has received much attention from Catholic Scripture scholars of late years ; they have had a very unpopular task in doing their work as the whole modern mentality is hostile to the pacific sense of possession in the spheres of the Spirit. It would be the easiest thing to gather together here the studies and findings of our Catholic authorities on Scripture and to show that Christ's unwavering conduct reveals in Him a most complete certainty as to His own position, His own character, His own work, His own future ; but I must be satisfied with a less comprehensive study of this important aspect of the Gospels. My aim is not directly exegetical, but I want to show how certainty is

an inherent quality of the new Dispensation because it was an inherent quality in Christ Himself.

In order to make evident Christ's own attitude it will be sufficient to quote those texts in which He describes Himself as the light of the world. In no other matter is He so assertive, does He come so near glorifying Himself : His description of Himself as the light of the world is a unique thing in the Gospels; there is never a word which limits His immense claim. He is light to the point of dazzling those who gaze at Him with pride and defiance :

" And this is the judgement : because the light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light. For their works were evil." (John iii, 19.)

" Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying : I am the light of the world. He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii, 12.)

" And Jesus said : for judgement I am come into this world ; that they who see not may see ; and they who see may become blind." (*Ibid.* ix, 39.)

" Jesus therefore said to them : Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not. And he that walketh in darkness knoweth

not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light that you may be the children of light . . . . I am come, a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me may not remain in darkness." (*Ibid.* xii, 35, 36, 46.)

What a splendour of internal vision there must have been in our Lord as He moved amongst men. Catholic theology teaches that His human soul possessed, from the moment of His conception in the Virgin's womb, the clear vision of Deity. Certainly the passages I have here gathered together fully bear out this theological tenet; and in all our meditations on Christ we ought to infuse our thoughts with this conviction that we are looking upon the acts of One who without ceasing was beholding the Face of His Father who is in heaven, and this more clearly and more comprehensively than any of the angels who watch over the little ones.

In dealing with that modern form of Christ-biography which lays stress on the failures of Christ I feel that I am treading on ground where there grow the choicest flowers of piety. It is not possible to condemn wholesale a form of sympathetic love towards Christ which makes of His so-called failures a very constant theme of meditation. The theologian is never justified in criticising Catholic sentiment unless that

sentiment be evidently derogatory to the position of the Son of God. It sometimes happens that a special form of compassionate love towards our Lord in His sufferings, which was very illumined and quite sound at its inception, is subsequently misapplied and not correctly understood by those who are less illumined, with whom feeling is more powerful than intelligence. So let us ask the question quite frankly : can it be said that Christ failed on earth ? Let us first define failure in a general way. Failure there can only be when the means employed to bring about a certain object are incapable of producing the expected result. There could not be failure simply because things do not happen ideally ; in order that there should be failure there must be a definite effort at success. So we could not say that Christ failed because Athens and Rome did not acknowledge Him in His lifetime, or, speaking more generally, because mankind was not converted to Him before He left this world. As nothing we know concerning Christ warrants the supposition that it was His intention to convert the pagan world in His own lifetime, as there is not the least vestige in the Gospels of His having had any such intention or having made any effort towards such an accomplishment, it could not be said that He failed, however sad a thing it may be, in itself, that the world did

not receive Him. So we can only look for possible failure to those external purposes of life which Christ definitely set before Himself. The purpose which we might call His own sanctification He achieved of course, most gloriously and most successfully; even the most sympathetic mystic would never commiserate Christ for having fallen short of the measure of sanctity He set before Himself. Such compassion would not be piety but blasphemy :

" And for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." (John xvii, 19.)

We have evidently to confine our attention to the external, visible purposes of the Son of man if we are to see failure anywhere. But here we are on very uncertain ground, for we have never been told by Christ in the Gospels what He expected to achieve in His lifetime. That He had a work to do, He said very often ; what that work was, He never said explicitly. But He was emphatic in declaring that He finished the work which He had come to do :

" I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John xvii, 4.)

No doubt the most obvious thing to say would be this, that Christ's work was to convert the Jewish people who were then living in Palestine and to make them admit His divine Messiahship.

Thus complete success would have been this, that at a given portion of His mortal career every Jew in Palestine should adore Him as the Son of God. Candidly, are we allowed to say that Christ had set before Himself any such task in His lifetime, and that He failed, positively, because He fell short of the realisation of His object? Here again nothing in the Gospels is a guidance ; we are not at all sure that the Father meant Him to do such a work : that He was sent to the erring sheep of the house of Israel He said more than once, but that is not the same as a wholesale conversion of the people to His Messiahship in His own days.

As far as we know Christ was not working for a definite triumph to take place at a given date, so that His inability to bring off such a triumph could not be considered as a failure, or as a thing hoped for which did not materialise. His public life was so short, His movements up and down the Holy Land had so little resemblance to the plan of one who was bent on unifying a nation in one purpose, that one feels bound to say that it does not appear as if He expected a widespread conversion of Israel in His lifetime. When the crowds came to make Him into a King He withdrew into the mountains :

" Jesus therefore, when he knew that they would come to take him by force and make him

king, fled again into the mountain, himself alone." (John vi, 15.)

Very significant in this matter is the rebuke which His "brethren" permitted themselves to make:

"Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. And his brethren said to him: Pass from hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see thy works which thou dost. For there is no man that doth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, manifest thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him." (John vii, 2-5.)

Christ's meek reply reveals a definite policy on His part:

"Then said Jesus to them: My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready." (*Ibid.* 6.)

He imposes secrecy on those who have seen His glory in the Transfiguration:

"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man till the Son of man be risen from the dead." (Matt. xvii, 9.)

So also He enjoins silence on the men who have been the objects of miraculous cures at His hands. That it was His object to win at least a certain number of men to a relative

comprehension of His mission in His lifetime seems beyond doubt ; but nothing justifies us in maintaining that He was bent on making the whole people of Israel understand the mystery of His Personality and that, not having accomplished this, He failed. The tragedy that ended His life can on no account be called a failure because He surrounded it with such manifest signs of His superiority to His enemies that even the most timid of His followers did not think of Him as having been defeated, though they could not understand at first how His death could be reconciled with His visible power. His death is not a thing of infirmity but, in ancient ecclesiastical language, "a thing of power," and the interval between that death and the Resurrection was so short that the idea of failure, in the modern sense, has no room there.

The only circumstances in Christ's life with any likelihood of disappointment, of hopes gone astray, of failure, would be Christ's ultimate position with regard to those men—how numerous they were we do not know—whom He meant to win for Himself, but who either refused to follow Him or betrayed Him. It is essentially a case of the failure of grace ; I mean to say that grace in a most splendid and plentiful form and measure was offered to some men and they refused to accept it ; nay, they even turned

against it. To apply the word failure to those mysterious tragedies of the spirit is of course to take great liberties with the thoughts and counsels of God. In that sense Christ would be failing in glory to-day, God would have been failing ever since man rebelled against Him. This is not a failure to be predicated particularly of Christ's mortal life, as it is a universal phenomenon which has neither time nor space : it is the insoluble problem of divine grace and and the created free will. Christ indeed speaks repeatedly with sadness, even with tears, of this unaccountable reality, but there is no evidence that He considered Himself as having been frustrated or as having failed in His efforts because men turned from Him ; as a rule Christ Himself or the Evangelist falls back on some deeper mystery of divine prescience, of divine judgement, to account for man's obstinacy. The fall of Judas is the one event which Christ singles out as an instance, not of failure on His own part, but of the fulfilment of a divine judgement. The formation of the twelve Apostles is spoken of by Christ as one of the chief duties committed to Him by the Father :

" I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world. Thine they were : and to me thou gavest them. And they have kept thy word. Now they have known

that all things which thou hast given me are from thee." (John xvii, 6, 7.)

That an Apostle should apostatise under the very eyes of Christ is certainly the very nearest approach to what we might call a failure, because the perfecting of the twelve was evidently the aim of the Son of God. Yet here we find Christ, as an explanation of this most sad event, referring to things that had been said by the prophets long before it took place :

" While I was with them, I kept them in thy name. Those whom thou gavest me have I kept : and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture may be fulfilled." (John xvii, 12.)

S John on his own account rises to great heights when he gives the explanation of the incredulity of the Jews :

" And whereas he had done so many miracles before them, they believed not in him : That the saying of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he said : Lord, who hath believed our hearing? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because Isaias said again : He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted : and I should heal them.

These things said Isaias, when he saw his glory and spoke of him." (John xii, 37-40.)

That Christ was sad in His mortal days, sad even unto death over the blindness of men, over the catastrophes which that blindness would bring on the Jewish people, seems to be beyond doubt; but this is not the same thing as to say that He was conscious of having failed. A circumstance which only a more careful study of the Gospel shows in all its importance is this: Christ considered Himself to be in this world a judgement; He felt that in His Person the separation of good and evil had already begun: He gives solemn warning in the words already quoted:

"For judgement I am come into this world; that they who see not may see, and they who see may become blind." (John ix, 39.)

Such words reveal to us a Christ who was conscious that at no time would it be possible for Him to be overcome or overpowered unless He so willed. This opposition to evil in Him was a most positive thing; and, may we not say, speaking humanly, that, taking for granted the perverse will of the Pharisees, it was just that they should be blinded by the effulgence of Christ's sanctity since they had refused to be illumined by it?

"And some of the Pharisees, who were with him, heard: and they said to him: 'Are we also

blind?' Jesus said to them : If you were blind, you should not have sin : but now you say : We see. Your sin remaineth." (John ix, 40, 41.)

We pay too little attention, perhaps, to that most characteristic side of Christ's mission—that He was in His own Person the great dividing line between good and evil from the day that He appeared on this earth. John the Baptist said a wonderful thing concerning Christ and His power of separating good from evil ; he represents Him with the fan in His hand, with a strong arm throwing up into the air the unsifted grain of humanity to let the winds divide the chaff from the wheat :

" Whose fan is in his hand : and he will purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his barn : but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (Luke iii, 17.)

This judgement of Christ, in the eyes of the Baptist, was a thing to start immediately, the moment the great Holy One should show Himself.

I need hardly enlarge here upon the fact that, whatever may have been the checks put by men's malice on Christ's external career, one thing is beyond doubt, that through the accidents of His mortal life He carried out His work of the Redemption with supreme perfection : concerning this there can be no doubt in any Christian's

mind. Moreover the things He suffered were so appointed that through them He entered into His glory :

" Then he said to them : O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory ? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things that were concerning him." (Luke xxiv, 25-27.)

Very soon the Apostles learned how to view the events that had befallen Christ ; they recognised a divine dispensation, a divine permission, God thus carrying out His designs. This interpretation of the tragedies of Christ's mortal life has been accepted in Catholic tradition :

" This same (Jesus) being delivered up, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain " (Acts ii, 23.)

" And now, brethren . . . I know that you did it through ignorance : as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." (Acts iii, 17, 18.)

With these words of S Peter, speaking under the inspiration of the newly poured out Paraclete,

we may well conclude this chapter. Compassion for the suffering Christ is indeed a precious *charisma* in Catholic spirituality, but not less precious are the Church's certainties of outlook and behaviour which come to her from the ever-blessed fact that her Lord was at every moment the Master of His own destiny.

XIII

THE FAMILY OF GOD

ONE of the most subtle but also most insistent dangers which to-day beset our faith in a divine Covenant is a false notion of Catholicism. Universality of outlook has become the nemesis of the particularism of those national and tribal forms of Christianity which were the result of the religious split of the sixteenth century. There is noticeable everywhere a great reaction against the baneful particularism which for several centuries was the only known and orthodox form of protestantism. The modern mind certainly shows a Catholic tendency in this recoil from the servitude of regionalism in religion. But this insurrection of the mind against the tyranny of state religion is only a negative thing, though even as such it is welcome to the observer of religious movements. Its danger lies in this, that of Catholicism it possesses only the extent without having the depth. The universality of brotherhood which is preached becomes an increasingly superficial universality, because the dogmatic contents of that brotherhood are diluted

with mere humanism of a most unsupernatural kind to an extent that is positively alarming. So there is great need for a Catholicism that is as deep as it is broad, whose universality is a positive thing; a Catholicism that is identical with a Catholic people. It is no doubt a claim greatly resented by the modern world when the Church of Rome asserts herself to be the Catholic Church and the only Catholic Church because, besides possessing ideals and doctrines that are for the whole human race, she claims that her people *are* the human race. She recognises herself, in literal exactness of language, in that Church of which we sing in the *Te Deum*: *Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur ecclesia.* The Church of Rome maintains that this great profession of universal and unanimous praise of God is as true to-day as it was in the fourth and fifth centuries, as she is beyond all dispute in our times the Church of the *orbis terrarum.*

The notion of Catholicism appears in the Scriptures under the significant ideas of the family of God and the people of God. The term Catholic, with its tremendous implications, is not to be found; but the inspired writings exhibit the idea under the form of the family of God, the house of God, the people of God. As a complementary idea also running through the Scrip-

tures we have the notion of inheritance, the profound symbol of the will, the act by which one generation leaves its estate to the next with legal validity. It will be seen at a glance that this concept of the family of God, or the people of God, is in direct opposition to much of the religious literature of our own time; we seem to have despaired of such an ideal, or even we seem to suspect such an ideal as being a form of religious selfishness. "Why," says the modern man, "should there be any special set of human beings pretending to be God's people to the exclusion of everyone else: is not this reversion to the odious type of the Lutheran provincialism in Christianity, is not this notion of a people of God directly destructive of Catholicism?" On the other hand it will be seen readily that for any Catholic to consider himself as a member of a spiritual family, as a citizen of a special spiritual race, means a modification—and a very profound one at that—of his whole religious sentiments; he even feels at once that he enters into a ready-made inheritance, into a definite tradition of spirituality and grace, and he sees that the life of the Spirit can never be for him a matter that concerns himself only.

One of the great difficulties which to-day confront us in the simple acceptance of the doctrine of a spiritual family, is the great popularity of the

science of anthropology ; the past history of mankind is read by the anthropologist in a light that is not the light of the theologians. Even amongst Catholics we notice the tendency to belittle such aspects of revelation as have to do with the origin of man and with his fall, because they seem to suspect a lack of solidity in the Biblical foundations of the history of mankind. The science of origins has played havoc even with theologians, if not expressly, certainly by implication. Many a writer seems to say : "Origins do not matter, let us deal with things as they are to-day, they are evidence enough ; they justify themselves through the very fact of their existence." Yet, when we come to look into the question, Christianity could never defend itself unless it were ready to defend its claim that God, at a definite period in the history of the universe, created the human race to be His own family and His own people. As it would be hopeless to explain the Catholic Church of to-day unless we made her the heiress of that Church which in the Upper Room received the Holy Ghost, so, on the other hand, it would be impossible to explain the Upper Room, to make clear the position of the Mother of Jesus who was one of the "hundred and twenty" gathered therein, unless we are ready to accept the story of Abraham, the story of

Adam and Eve ; for from beginning to end it is essentially, in the words of the Liturgy, *magnum hereditatis mysterium,* a great mystery of inheritance, a family heritage, a juridical continuance of a people. Besides anthropology, another intellectual interest of our times has tended to disturb the issues in this matter of the position of the people of God. This new interest is more religious than is anthropology ; it is the question which has become a practically necessary section of theology, I mean the matter of the salvation of the infidel, for such is the title under which a very dark problem is being approached. Our age is making this query of far greater importance than has ever been the case in the past. It is clear, of course, that this perplexity is proper to believers, for no infidel, supposing that any man take it for granted that he is himself an infidel, would ever be troubled with such doubts. It is in fact one of the psychologically interesting features of this matter that only such people as are anxious about their own salvation concern themselves about the fate of the so-called infidel. May we not assume that many a non-Christian, who is still a believer in some great traditional truths, may also ask himself the question what chance Christians have to be saved? In a more confined field of observation we have seen that well-meaning and conservatively-minded

Lutherans are as much concerned with the question how Catholics are saved as Catholics, on their side, are anxious to think out a mode of salvation for the Lutherans. Former generations of Christians seem comparatively free from the incubus of this distracting problem, though, of course, there never was a time when the infidel was left outside the interest of believers. But certainly the problem was never made into something that might in any way disturb the serenity that comes from the conviction that we are the family of God, that we are the people of God and that we have been the object of a most merciful election. In the writings of S Paul we find traces of his mental attitude towards those who are not in the covenanted graces of the old and the new Testament. There is the Apostle's famous pronouncement in his Epistle to the Romans :

"For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law : these, having not the law, are a law to themselves. Who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them : and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another, In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." (Rom. ii, 14-16.)

Elsewhere, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he leaves the one who is "without" to the judgement of God, whilst he, as the Apostle of Christ, has power to judge those "within":

"For what have I to do to judge them that are without? Do not you judge them that are within? For them that are without God will judge." (I Cor. v, 12.)

As an actual description of the attitude of the Christian towards the human masses with all their errors and darknesses we have S Paul's words to Timothy:

"But the servant of the Lord must not wrangle: but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient, With modesty admonishing them that resist the truth: if peradventure God may give them repentance to know the truth; And they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil by whom they are held captive at his will." (II Tim. ii, 24-26.)

That God is dealing mercifully and justly with all human souls every Christian takes for granted as an *a priori* truth, and there the matter may be left. Expressed in such general terms this truth is perfectly compatible with the fact that there is a people of God, that there is a family of God, that there are heirs of the Kingdom. But the modern theologian seems to go beyond that

merciful generality ; on the one hand he wants to know how grace can penetrate into the hearts of those who are not ostensibly of the people of God, and secondly he asks whether such as are touched by God's grace in some unacknowledged and uncovenanted way really belong to the family of God with a sort of hidden kinship. It is to be admitted that the superstition of numbers has not been without leaving its mark on the minds of some who are not well trained in the art of appreciating supernatural values ; they seem to be overpowered by the fact that there are so many men outside the visible dispensation of Christ's Redemption, simply because of their numerical quantity. Yet the problem would be the same, its importance would be equally great whether it were the question of one or of millions. To me it seems that whatever solution we give to that anxious query the glorious position of the chosen people of God is not affected thereby. No explanation can be given that would in any way interfere with that compactness of the spiritual generation which makes us all into one family with Christ and His Apostles, with the Prophets, with His Mother, with the Patriarchs and the Just of all times.

" Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners : but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, Built upon

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit." (Eph. ii, 19-22.)

More telling language in order to express the unity of the spiritual society, the Catholic Church, could not be imagined. The point that arises is this : is there anything in the religious experience of mankind which even remotely approaches such a description? Without hesitation the Catholic says that this ideal has been realised, is being daily realised. This sense of the solidarity of the spiritual society is perhaps the one thing of which the non-Catholic is most completely deprived ; looseness of cohesion in things spiritual is the very first sign of heresy or schism. So there is no forcing of metaphors when I say the compactness or looseness of structural faith is the dividing line between that which is Catholicism and that which is not Catholicism. The past generations of believers have left us their heirs in spiritual matters to an extent never realised in the natural succession of human generations. The hundred and twenty souls who were persevering with one mind in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus and with

His brethren in the Upper Room, waiting for the Holy Ghost, were the repositories of all the promises which God had made to the Patriarchs : " To Abraham and his seed for ever." All the future generations of Christians are only additions to that complete family : new children are born into it ; it is a tradition of spirit that has never known a moment's interruption. This, and nothing else, we mean when we say that the Church is Apostolic ; this term expresses technically that great biological fact in the supernatural order, that we are all born into the family of God.

Through this law of the divine inheritance the position of Mary the Mother of Jesus is seen in its due proportions : through her, Christ became the natural heir of all that went before : through her, the throne of David became His right :

" And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke i, 32, 33.)

For the Son of God took not only flesh from Mary, He took from her and through her all those ancient spiritual rights which go back to Paradise and which make Christ with all juridical validity the " Heir of the World." For Christ to become Man was not only to assume a human nature : it meant also the assumption of every human responsibility.

The continuity of spiritual work is to be given its broadest possible meaning in Catholicism : none of us is a beginner in the true sense, for we always enter into a ready-made state ; we are not asked to think out fresh paths of sanctity, for we are essentially of the household of God ; our traditional life surrounds us on all sides ; we are taken up into it, and it is always greater than ourselves. Nor is our usefulness in the Kingdom of Christ a thing detached, standing by itself, a new beginning ; we invariably enter into the labours of others. It is quite startling to hear Christ declare to His Apostles that they are not sowers but reapers : others have sown and the Apostles entered into their labours. We should have thought it a more exact rendering of the situation if the twelve had been described as the sowers of the seed instead of the reapers, yet Christ's words are plain :

"Do you not say : There are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh ? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries. For they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting : that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For in this is the saying true : That it is one man that soweth and it is another that reapeth. I have sent you to reap in that

which you did not labour. Others have laboured: and you have entered into their labours." (John iv, 35-38.)

The spiritual labour of the long centuries that went before are as much part of the Christian dispensation as are the sanctities of the Church of Christ since Pentecost. The worker in the Kingdom of God is not a pioneer, is not a discoverer, is not an inventor; he is an inheritor, who, receiving the rich endowment of ten talents, must labour to make them produce ten more.

XIV

THE DIVINE PROMISES

PROMISE is a Scriptural idea of such constant recurrence that one might venture to write a special tract of theology on the divine promises. Promise is an essential element of the Covenant which God has made with man, whether it be the old Covenant or the new Covenant. The old Covenant is built on promise. The faithful of the old law are the sons of promise. The stability of the promise of God is the great theocentric fact with the chosen people. Not to doubt God's promise in spite of appearances is the supremest act of faith, hope and charity in the Patriarchs. To doubt God's promise is apostasy from God :

" Who against hope believed in hope ; that he might be made the father of many nations, according to that which was said to him : So shall thy seed be. And he was not weak in faith. Neither did he consider his own body, now dead (whereas he was almost an hundred years old), nor the dead womb of Sara. In the promise of God he staggered not by distrust : but was

strengthened in faith, giving glory to God: Most fully knowing that whatsoever he has promised, he is able also to perform. And therefore it was reputed to him unto justice." (Rom. iv, 18-22.)

As for the new Covenant, Christ, we have the famous words of S Paul declaring Him to be all promise in the present tense:

"For all the promises of God are in him, It is. Therefore, also by him. Amen to God, unto our glory." (II Cor. i, 20.)

That the promise so faithfully believed and so constantly remembered should be a great spiritual merit is not indeed surprising if we recall the length of time between the promise made and the promise fulfilled. Its unalterable terms were the basal stability of the ancient Dispensation; through all the vicissitudes and sins and disasters of the ancient people there is one unifying idea, the promise made unto the fathers. If ever there was an established religion the faith of the Jewish people was such indeed, owing to the all-pervading element of the promise:

"For God making promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom he might swear, swore by himself, Saying: Unless blessing I shall bless thee and multiplying I shall multiply thee. And so patiently enduring he obtained the promise. For men swear by one

greater than themselves, and an oath for confirmation is the end of all their controversy. Wherein God, meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed an oath: That by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, we who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us. Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil." (Heb. vi, 13-19.)

It is then in the nature of a promise not to be progressive: its terms are of supreme importance in their first literal sense; if it were altered, even for a better thing, it would lose its power, as it would show mutability in the mind and the will of him who made the promise. Immutability is its very essence.

What, then, is the rôle of promise in the new Covenant? To say the least it is as great as it was in the religion of the Patriarchs. Christ, indeed, is the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers: "For all the promises of God are in him"; but in His turn He has made great promises: He is Himself a promise, and more than ever we live under the régime of promise. There is a difference, however: we have a pledge of the promise which is peculiar to the new Covenant, the Holy Spirit of promise:

" You were signed with the holy Spirit of promise, Who is the pledge of our inheritance." (Eph. i, 13, 14.)

The promises of the new Covenant are of two kinds : the dogmatic promises and the personal promises. By the former we understand those pronouncements whose fulfilment is in the future, the eschatological doctrines such as the coming of Christ, the resurrection of all flesh and eternal life. Under this heading we have also to class those assurances which Christ has given to His Church in her official capacity, that the gates of hell will not prevail against her, that He will be with her every day until the end. A keen belief in these promises is true Catholic faith : to begin to doubt is the first step towards apostasy :

" Knowing this first : That in the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts, Saying : Where is his promise or his coming? For since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (II Pet. iii, 3, 4.)

It is again part of dogmatic promise that eternal life will be granted to all the dead who die in the Lord :

" (God) hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead : Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and

undefiled and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you, Who by the power of God are kept by faith unto salvation." (I Pet. i, 3, 4, 5.)

It is certainly to be admitted that all true Christianity is profoundly imbued with this notion of the divine promise and that much of our worship and religion ought to be an active faith in God's fidelity. This element of promise alone if well considered, should preserve us from all extravagance of doctrinal development and religious evolution. Our main advance is towards the fulfilment of the promise, not towards a new religion. Our faith is not a philosophy but a Covenant, because its future fortunes will be promises fulfilled, not theories worked out. We may understand the promise better and love it more as we go on, but no new promises are given to us, no new pacts are made, God does not take upon Him any further engagements towards man. The promises given to us are so great and so precious that, in the words of S Peter, nothing in the world can have any importance by comparison. Could it not be said that this forgetfulness of the element of promise in Christianity is immediately responsible for much inferiority in the religious devotions of the present day?

We come now to the personal promises. Here again my first remark is that to establish spiritual

life—I mean individual spiritual life—outside the theology of promise is bound to be disastrous. At no time do we receive anything from God nor do we appeal for anything that has not been promised to us ; our individual spiritual life is as much under the régime of divine promise as the corporate life of the Church of God. When I make here the distinction between dogmatic promises and personal promises on the part of God in the new Dispensation, the difference is more one of emphasis than one of kind. By personal promises I do not mean those made to any definite man or woman : there is no instance in the New Testament of such exclusive engagements on the part of Christ to any individual Christian except perhaps in the case of the Apostles, and more particularly in the case of S Paul, to whom Christ gave assurances of most immediate protection :

" And the Lord said to Paul in the night, by a vision : Do not fear, but speak. And hold not thy peace, Because I am with thee and no man shall set upon thee, to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." (Acts xviii, 9, 10.)

Later on another such assurance of ultimate victory is given to Paul by Christ :

" And the night following, the Lord standing by him, said : Be constant ; for as thou hast

testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (Acts xxiii, 11.)

By personal promises I mean here those assurances given by Christ to Christians for their individual life; they are spoken alike to all the faithful, not to any one in particular, and their purpose is to give certainty in the world of personal sanctification:

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." (John xv, 5.)

"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." (John xiv, 21.)

These are some of the mystical promises of Christ which form the basis of our life in the Spirit; through them we have been promised an increase of life under definite supernatural conditions. Then there are those promises which contain the assurance of protection against evil:

"A hair of your head shall not perish." (Luke xxi, 18.)

"These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress. But have confidence. I have overcome the world." (John xvi, 33.)

The promise of Christ's protection because He has all power in heaven and on earth has been to many generations of Christians, in their great tribulation, the source of incredible

strength. We have been given most certain tokens of Christ's willingness and power to protect us against all evil.

The second class of promises includes those of a more special kind, the assurances to those who follow the perfect life, who renounce all things for Christ and become His disciples in a more exclusive way :

" Then Peter answering, said to him : Behold we have left all things and have followed thee : what therefore shall we have? And Jesus said to them : Amen, I say to you that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold and shall possess life everlasting." (Matt. xix, 27-29.)

The promise of the hundred-fold is more than a good wish on the part of Christ, it is a real institution, it is the charter of foundation of evangelical poverty ; the Religious life, so-called, the life of evangelical perfection, presupposes the divine promise as its *conditio sine quâ non.*

Christ has promised to His Church great gifts of the Spirit and precious graces. He has

enriched His Church beyond measure through promise :

"Ascending on high, He led captivity captive : he gave gifts to men." (Eph. iv, 8.)

The measure in which He will distribute those gifts to particular souls is not a matter of promise but the effect of individual election and predestination :

"All these things, one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will." (I Cor. xii, 11.)

The measure of grace is left entirely to the free choice of God. No Christian can pretend through any act of his to more grace than God has predestinated for him. The wonderful gifts which we admire in the Saints must always be considered as gratuitous liberalities of God : even fidelities to grace once received do not entitle holy men to more than that reward which is the direct fruit of every act, nor could a Christian prepare himself for the higher graces of the Spirit unless God had so willed it and had made that very preparation the first part of the exceptional grace.

In this connexion an interesting point may be raised which is not without actuality if one bears in mind a good many theories on the things of the Spirit in our own days. Is there a definite promise of the graces of the Spirit attached to

the performance of ascetical works of a given kind? Is it not a tradition of the Christian generations of ascetics that great illuminations are given to them if they pass resolutely through the purification of Catholic asceticism? By all the rules of theology the mere physical performance of ascetical works could never bring grace, though it could produce certain mental states of a wonderful kind which would give great happiness to the ascetic, whether he be a Christian or a Neo-Platonist; such experiences would not come from grace, but from human nature, and they would really be worth all the bitterness of endeavour which is their price. But in the supernatural order of things the question can only be this, whether God has attached the high graces of contemplation to the traditional works of asceticism, always supposing such works to be supernatural in themselves. There is such a body of opinion and such a long experience in practical Christian sanctity that I should be willing to admit that there is an unwritten promise of Christ, handed down by tradition, which guarantees the glories of the contemplative life and the consolations of the Spirit to all those who follow in the way of the great recognised ascetics of the Church.

XV

DIVINE PRESUPPOSITIONS

I HAVE said in an earlier chapter that the elements of the divine Covenant might aptly be called divine presuppositions. Our daily supernatural life presupposes an almost infinite number of sublime realities which are all taken for granted by the believer, though he may speak of them but rarely. We act and we exhort to action, always on the understanding that action, in the supernatural sphere, both in ourselves and in other people, is the result of an almost endless chain of causes none of whose links are in our hands. Our orthodoxy is safeguarded through those presuppositions. If we ever were to view man's spiritual activities as things complete in themselves, as facts aloof and independent, and not as the fruits of a tree whose roots reach down to the very heart of increated Reality, we should be heretics of a most dangerous type. The writer on the things of the Spirit may produce volumes on man's moral or ascetical activities: he remains orthodox through his presuppositions because, whatever efforts he expects from man, he presupposes powers and vitalities that are

higher than man, that come from God, and that are the real causes of man's spiritual fertility ; if he had no such suppositions he would be merely a pagan moralist, not a Christian teacher. The most vehement exhortations of the preacher are always hypothetical, in the sense that none of the things he asks of the just man or of the sinner are at all possible but for the divine interventions of supernatural grace. The zealous missionary going forth into heathen lands with the message of Christ presupposes a host of unseen fellow-workers who precede him, who accompany him and who alone save his venture from being a lamentable failure. An easy parallel could be established between presuppositions in the natural order and in the supernatural, and it would be found that, great as are the things which are presupposed by every step I take in my daily life, progress in the higher life must take even greater things for granted. If I promise to visit a friend at his home on a given day, my promise takes so much for granted, that the enumeration of the things on whose endurance I rely soon becomes baffling, not to say impossible. Many of us never make a promise without the pious initials D.V. This abbreviation is certainly a most comprehensive formula : it truly means that the sun and the moon and the stars should go on in their courses, that millions

of other contingencies should remain unchanged, none of which is it in my power to alter in the least degree, though my projected move depends entirely on them. Of course none of these things do we ever mention, or even think of ; we may just remember certain possibilities such as sudden illness, or even death, to put the matter at its worst, and the dread of such eventualities keeps us moderate in all our schemes ; but it would be no extravagance to make the abiding power of universal gravitation enter into our plans for an afternoon jaunt, because we could not move a step without it. Now if this sounds extravagant, though it be perfectly true, as an allusion to the infinite presuppositions that underlie our daily life, it is not by any manner of means an exaggerated simile for our supernatural life. As many things are necessary to make my every step in the higher life possible as there are physical elements at the root of my every movement on the surface of the earth. The difference is not in the number nor in the nearness of those underlying powers, the difference is in their evidence. Many though not all of the natural powers are manifest, they come under our experience ; we inhale them, so to speak, whenever we are physically active. In this the supernatural differs completely from the natural. None of those great supernatural presuppositions

are actually tangible, actually visible, none come under our experience ; of all powers they are the most hidden ; and this is why man is in constant danger of looking upon himself as the full source and the complete cause of all his goodness. It is only through the act of prayer, I mean the prayer of demand, that he becomes practically aware of his total dependence on powers which are not of his making. From time to time the soul of the saint is given, through a divine illumination, a passing glimpse of the abysmal vitalities that render possible his own limited personal vitality in God. These are the moments of the supreme self-abasement of which a Christian saint alone is capable : then from a moment of natural despair the elect soul rises to the sublimest effort of divine hope and knows that without God all would be lost, and understands in its fulness the phrase that God is all in all. It is the realisation of the utter nothingness of man, not in the sense that man is a nonentity, which would be untrue, but in the sense that all man's activity is as nothing compared with the immensities of life which alone render that activity possible. The saint is shrivelled up in humility, not through the vision of an infinite void, but through the vision of an infinite fulness, but a fulness that is outside himself and of which he partakes through an act of absolutely gratuitous

mercy. No such states of soul are possible to the self-sufficient moralist with a pagan upbringing.

Grace is not indeed the greatest of our divine presuppositions, but it is the most immediate element, underlying all we do and hope or even are in the spiritual order. Catholic doctrine, Catholic language, and Catholic sentiment are profoundly informed with this idea of grace. The necessity of divine grace as a presupposition for all spiritual activity has become a doctrine so firmly established in the Church that we almost take liberties with it. Preachers are allowed to exhort, writers are permitted to analyse, spiritual directors have full liberty to guide, though they mention the fact of grace but rarely. This does not mean that we have fallen back into the errors of Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism, but our insistence on human activity in our exhortatory divinity is perfectly sound on account of our deep-rooted conviction that things have a meaning only through this great presupposition of a supernatural grace. To how great an extent grace is presupposed may astonish even the Catholic when for the first time he is made aware of the Church's pronouncements on these subjects.

For the moment I am concerned with this point of divine grace as a presupposition ; it is not my intention to give a full analysis of the doctrine

of grace. From its very nature grace is mostly a thing entirely beyond human experience ; even then when we act most supernaturally we cannot be aware of that all-important factor in our act, divine grace ; nothing short of a heavenly illumination could enable us to detect that element of divine vitality. There is, indeed, a class of cases which through their very nature are experimental : for the sake of clearness let us mention one or two. A high grace of prayer is, by very definition, observable and experimental ; the consolations of the Spirit must be felt if they are to be consolations at all, but such graces constitute a very restricted province in the realm of the supernatural. Grace, which alone makes all supernatural activity possible, is mostly hidden from the consciousness of man, yet its function we know by faith to be not only supremely important, but absolutely indispensable.

I have said that the Catholic Church is in full and pacific possession of the doctrine of the necessity of divine grace. Since the sixth century no event has happened inside the Church to disturb the deep conviction that nothing is possible to man in the supernatural order without grace. On the other hand we hear of almost gigantic controversies on this very matter in the last three centuries. This spiritual warfare does not concern the all-important point of the

necessity of grace, it centres merely round the nature of grace, or, more exactly still, round that infinitesimal point where God's activity and man's activity meet in the depths of human psychology. The interest of these controversies lies precisely in this complete remoteness of grace from conscious experience. Every school of thought in this matter starts, or anyhow ought to start, with the assumption that when we speak of grace we speak of an element whose existence is known to us only through faith. Consequently its mode of operation becomes truly immaterial to us even were it possible for us to grasp such a mode. In any hypothesis, no free act of man is conceivable in the supernatural order without that direct divine intervention, without that *auxilium* we call grace. Whatever theory we may hold concerning the metaphysical constitution of that *auxilium* it does not affect the Catholic position nor does it affect in any way our own conscious life, our practical efforts. Long before we act, according to the Catholic faith, even before we think of acting, and certainly before we think of analysing our act in the supernatural order, we have been forestalled by grace. We are therefore speaking all along in the hypothesis of the all-embracing influence of grace. It matters comparatively little what metaphysics we try in order to explain this ; such metaphysics

must of necessity remain entirely theoretical: they can affect neither our act nor our prayer, just as in nature varieties of views concerning the law of universal gravitation will never prevent a heavy object from tending towards the centre of the earth with irresistible force.

It might be said that metaphysics on the nature of grace cannot be left at all times to pass unchallenged, as they might be incompatible with some other well-defined doctrines of Catholicism, as, for instance, man's liberty of action or God's supremacy of causation. The eagerness, nay, even the bitterness of the controversies inside the Catholic schools have truly been inspired by this twofold concern, that no such metaphysics of grace could be propounded which, on the one hand, might make of the human will a passive slave of the divine Will, and on the other hand might diminish God's supremacy of influence as the First Cause of all reality. In other words, the great war has been a war about concepts, that we should not think of the divine action either too much or too little. That we are entirely under the divine action in grace we all admit, but how to visualise that action has been truly a battle in heaven, and peace is not yet and never will be, I think, for the very good reason that no created intellect will ever be able to understand how God works inside His

creatures : His action is to be presupposed but not to be explained. He is not a stranger whose hand interferes with our free march, but He is the cause of all freedom. At no time need we dread His partnership as excessive, since He permits us to be His fellow-workers. The happiest mood is the one in which we consider God as the source of all created reality, of all liberty, of all perfection, in which we look upon Him, not as an outsider who comes to do His work within us, but as the very home of our own being. For at no time are we more in God than when we act freely and holily through grace.

These musings on divine presuppositions and on the nearest of them, grace, belong to a study of the Covenant. The complete absence of the merely experimental in highest Catholic spirituality might lead us into temptation and make us forgetful of all divine action in us. It might appear as if the Testament in Christ's Blood were only a remembrance of the past instead of an unceasing influence for ever at work. When we act and speak like free men in the things of God, not like slaves, we do so because we presuppose the cardinal fact that in the new spiritual Covenant we have been made free :

" Now the Lord is a Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (II Cor. iii, 17.)

XVI

THE HIDDEN SPLENDOURS OF THE COVENANT

THE classical struggle between the conscious and unconscious in spiritual life has been fought over the matter of man's justification by grace in the theological controversies of the Reformation and the Counter Reformation. To show at a glance the difference of position between the Catholic and reformer at that period, the Council of Trent defined it as a tenet of the Catholic faith that without a special revelation no man could be certain of being in a state of justification, whilst the whole power and allurement of Lutheran divinity was that certainty of being in Christ through the act of faith which man was said to possess. Between these two extremes the religious psychology of the West has gone backwards and forwards unceasingly; on the one hand finding the Tridentine aloofness an unsatisfying kind of certainty for the modern hunger for evidence, and on the other hand not daring to take the Lutheran assurance too literally because the hard facts of life could never bear out such an assumption. When I speak of religious psychology I do not exclude from the

term Catholics themselves, as they too may be affected by the sentimental waves of their times and may accordingly show tendencies which are in constant need of correction by the stable dogmatic facts of the Church. The Catholic imagination is saved from extremes through the doctrinal definitions of the Church, those metaphysical statements which hold religious phantasy in check at epochs when without such restraint men's imaginations run wild. This great psychological problem which has come into such prominence through the idiosyncrasies of Luther's religious sentiment is all the more interesting as there is the corona of uncertain light round the sun of dogmatic definition. The Council of Trent says that man cannot be certain of his justification without a special privilege of revelation ; the Council by no means excludes probability in all its shades and degrees ; all that the Council banishes from the circle of Catholic doctrine is an individual certainty, possessed by every man, that he is in the charity of Christ. Luther claimed complete certainty for his faith ; had he been satisfied with mere probabilities even of the highest order, no one would have quarrelled with him.

Why should it appear to be more in conformity with the Catholic intuitions of man's supernatural state that the ultimate fact of justification by grace

should elude certain observation and indubitable consciousness? Ought we not to be prepared for the very opposite when we know through every Catholic source of evidence the importance of personal activity in spiritual life? The answer is simple : the state of justification is such an excellent state, is a thing so supernatural, that its very perfection makes it unknowable. Justification is that ministration of justice which, according to S Paul in his classical text of the new Covenant, "aboundeth in glory," but it has no visible effulgence on account of its excellent glory :

"For even that which was glorious in this part was not glorified by reason of the glory that excelleth." (II Cor. iii, 10.)

To perceive the fact of justification in man would be to perceive a divine fact, and for such perceptions we have no powers. Human acts, on the contrary, are never such that they can produce *ipso facto* the justifying grace in man ; the divine element must enter into it and indeed directly from God. So the last movement of the soul, its last tremor in the great upheaval of spiritual conversion, is entirely in the power of the Spirit of whom Christ predicates this very elusiveness as the main characteristic :

"The Spirit breatheth where he will and thou hearest his voice : but thou knowest not whence

he cometh and whither he goeth." (John iii, 8.)

A little historical anecdote is not without its lesson in this matter. When the Council of Trent started the discussion of this very point, compelled thereto by the Lutheran system of justification, the Cardinal Legate expressed his private personal opinion that man could possess certainty as to being in a state of justification. But the gradual working out of the theological implications of the question at issue brought light and demanded the definition concerning the unknowability of justification by man's soul.

The subject, however, which is of supreme interest in the Catholic view of spiritual life is this transcending perfection of the state of grace. We possess a quality so divine when the grace of God is in us—I mean sanctifying grace—that no human eye could detect it : the meeting place of God and the soul in the act of justification is in the very centre of the soul, as mystics would say. Now man, in this life, can never reach the centre of his own soul because all conscious acts spring from a centre, but they do not go back to it, as a stream does not flow back to its source.

The obvious objection to this Catholic assumption of a state of sanctity that is non-experimental sanctity is its apparent uselessness. What is the profit to a man to be declared holy in so mysterious a fashion? Is he any the better

for having faith in a state of perfection which will always be beyond his own comprehension? Now it is the emphatic answer of Catholic theology that it is a matter of supreme spiritual advantage to man to believe in a sanctity which, so to speak, is greater than himself, to know himself to be a vessel of election in a sense which he cannot understand but which the angels know. It is for man a most comforting thing to be told by the Church that he is heir to a life which is infinitely greater than his natural life. Were it possible for us to encompass all we have, to visualise it fully, to hold it in our hands and examine it from all sides, where would be real greatness? There is true genius of psychological intuition in the Catholic doctrine of the unknowability of the state of grace because no limits are set to our aspirations. Man's dignity through grace, in the Catholic position, remains truly unfathomable; the element of holiness is indestructible because the mystery of man's soul in Christ is impenetrable. Now these happy results are in no way diminished through the circumstance of man's relative uncertainty as to whether he actually possesses the supreme gift of justification. The uncertainty is not caused by any doubt as to God's part in man's justification: the hesitation comes entirely from our incapacity to say whether or not we have fulfilled such con-

ditions as are prerequisite to the state of justification; doubt of this kind, far from being demoralising, is indeed a sign of spiritual health.

The sanctification of infants through Baptism is, if one may use the word, the boldest thing the Church teaches in this matter of unconscious holiness. Infant Baptism might well be called the extremest form of Catholic faith in the reality and validity of things unperceived and unseen. That Christian generations have taken this doctrine of infant Baptism for granted is a clear evidence of that gift of understanding which the Holy Spirit has imparted to man. In this case truly the thing has come to pass of which the prophet speaks, that "the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the covering waters of the sea." (Is. xi, 9.) For there is no doubt as to the practical faith of all Catholic generations in the inherent sanctity of the baptised child. The assurance that the infant if it dies before the age of reason is an elect of God, that its soul goes straight to heaven, is, of course, a thing entirely new in the history of mankind, a mystic perception exclusive to Christianity. Men have been given an intuition of a hidden glory which they never possessed before; the regenerate soul of the Christian child has become a mighty thing. That infant Baptism, with the advent of protestantism, should be less favoured, in fact should be

even denied by powerful protestant sects, is not surprising. If the emphasis is put on man's personal act instead of being put on grace and the Covenant of God, sooner or later there is no room for a doctrine whose true setting is the absence of all personal acts, as in the case of infant Baptism.

In this matter of infant Baptism the uncertainty of which we have spoken above vanishes. As the valid administration of the Sacrament of Baptism is a physical reality it becomes absolutely positive, through our faith in the Sacraments, that the baptised child possesses the grace of justification. The definition of the Council of Trent to which we have alluded is to be restricted to man in possession of his full powers. Those powers may fail, but Baptism cannot fail in the case of the children. This consideration gives strength to the impression that the main feature of the supernatural is not exactly uncertainty concerning its presence, but excellency and transcending perfection, which make its detection impossible without a special illumination. Catholicism does not rejoice in the uncertainties of the state of election, the supernatural state. It bears those doubts with humility and trust, as part of the present dispensation. The healthy Catholic outlook is one of joy and spiritual exhilaration over the

wonderful gifts of God, over the hidden splendours of the Covenant. It is very rare that the residuum of uncertainty as to the presence of grace in the individual soul is at all adverted to by the faithful or even by the mystic. It may take shape in specific states of morbid introversion, of unhealthy scrupulosity, but the normal attitude of the Catholic is that unless he be conscious of a deliberate, grievous sin, he takes it for granted that he is in Christ, that he is the friend of God. So by an unexpected working out of divine things the assurance, which he does not seek as the protestant seeks it, is given to the Catholic in a way that will always evade the self-centred seeker after pledges of personal election and salvation.

XVII

THE FRUITS OF JUSTICE

WE may consider now how man's good works in the supernatural order come, like all other spiritual realities, into the realm of the divine Covenant.

It is not without profound significance that the metaphor universally employed for man's personal activities through grace in the supernatural order is that of a tree bearing fruit :

" I am the true vine : and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he will take away : and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John xv, 1, 2.)

More explicitly still the fruitfulness is described by our Lord as the scope of His election of us :

" You have not chosen me : but I have chosen you ; and have appointed you, that you should go and bring forth fruit ; and your fruit should remain." (John xv, 16.)

This at once gives to man's spiritual activity a definiteness which we might not have expected

otherwise. There is in the immense history of Christian sanctity a sameness of activity which is not without its irritant element to the modern mind. Men want new ideals to-day, new thoughts, new works of justice : it might almost be suspected that, to satisfy their craving for the thing that has not yet been, they want new sins. Of the works of sanctity more than any other human events the words of Ecclesiastes are true :

"What is it that hath been? The same thing that shall be. What is it that hath been done? The same that shall be done. Nothing under the sun is new, neither is any man able to say : Behold this is new. For it hath already gone before in the ages that were before us." (Eccles. i, 9, 10.)

We may take it for granted that the fruits of Christian sanctity will be the same in the future as they have been hitherto, that nothing new will be asked of man, that no fresh burden will be laid on him that has not been borne by the Christians of the past, that there will be no spiritual experience so new and so strange as not to be easily classified under headings well known to the Church in her official criticism of the lives of her saints. Would it be possible for God to give His Church a spiritual life different from the one that has been hers up to now? This is a query one would not answer rashly : but it has pleased

God to give certainty to His Church by prescribing to Himself limits and definite spheres in the distribution of the Spirit. The institutional element, the covenanted measure is not absent from the personal activities of Christians in the supernatural order.

This everlasting sameness in the fruitfulness of Catholic sanctity has nothing in common with monotony or lack of enterprise. We start with the overpowering assumption that, through the Incarnation, the Son of God not only became Man but also assumed the ordinary and natural conditions of human life. Nothing could be more instructive than the classical Christian sobriety concerning the mortal career of the Son of God, made Man. Inside the ordinary setting of human life room was found for infinite sanctity to act, to move, to learn obedience from the things that He suffered.

"For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted he is able to succour them also that are tempted." (Heb. ii, 18.)

Nothing is further removed from the genius of the Gospels than the love of the marvellous; the miracles of Christ are entirely within the human setting; there is moderation and restraint about them which does the greatest credit to the culture of the Evangelists, to put this exegetical matter at its lowest. Most remarkable too is the

apparent conciseness, nay, even baldness of the accounts of Christ's condemnation and Death. Very little is to be gained for Christian spirituality from hyperbole concerning Christ's Passion; the profound significance of His way lies in the inward possibilities of the ordinary human life. There seems to be, in the human race, a latent craving for a mode of existence entirely different from the life which is our unavoidable burden. Now by sharing the complete condition of human life the Son of God has made it manifest that nothing could be gained by a revolutionary idealism concerning human conditions. Certainly the personal life of Christ Himself was a thing of divine institution, a thing of divine Will; the Father had outlined it, had marked its beginnings and its endings with the finger of His omnipotence. Infinitude, liberty and idealism are within that life, not outside it; the treasures of its redemptive merits are truly infinite, but they are to be found within the easily-numbered days of Christ's mortal career. It is the most constant teaching of the Church that all the spiritual activities of Christians are finite replicas of the life of their Master; our works are meritorious because, mystically speaking, they are repetitions of the works of Christ. With such a doctrinal position concerning spiritual fruitfulness there is no real novelty in

Christian hagiography ; sameness there must be, as there is sameness in the seasons, as there is sameness in the works of nature, as there is sameness in the events of human history, a sameness that comes, not from sterility, but from wealth of life.

True Catholic understanding of the art of life makes it possible for us to move with the greatest ease in all human things. We require no special kind of civilisation ; material prosperity is not necessary ; we are not even in need of political peace in order to bear the fruits of justice ; we are at home in every climate and every atmosphere. The tree that bears the fruit of sanctity is one essentially made to withstand storms ; being a good tree, it cannot bear evil fruit however bad the times may be.

The institutional and covenanted character of spiritual fruitfulness is perhaps the most important lesson our generation has to learn. The subtle pride of intellect which pervades everything makes us unconsciously contemptuous of the monotonies of Catholic hagiographies with their so-called pious jargon ; no biography has any chance of success unless it possess the fascinating gift of originality. The psychologist is in quest of new phenomena ; to the permanent, to the traditional mentality, he gives the derisive name of complex. No science

undermines Christian humility more persistently than the science of psychology in many of its aspects ; the craving for the new thing has made havoc in the life of many a soul whose career had started in the splendours of divine grace.

Coming back once more to the fundamental metaphor of the fruit tree, the character of permanency and sameness in the supernatural ethics of Christianity is truly a part of the doctrine of Christ's fulness. Christ possessed all sanctity : the finite and created sanctity of His Church in every one of her members is a manifestation of Christ's life. The purity of the Catholic concept of morality may be sullied without there being any actual heresy or falsehood ; it may be dimmed through the over-laying of alien systems which are not wrong but which are not supernatural. It could be made the matter of a very instructive study to see the reactions of human philosophies on the practical concept of Catholic ethics ; the reaction on Catholic dogma, though never negligible, has been much less perceptible, as dogma, from its very nature, is antagonistic to a merely natural view of reality. In the sphere of ethics, however, so far as the external act is concerned, the Catholic and the honest heathen behave much alike in most things of daily life ; what difference there may be is not a difference of action but a difference of

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intention, of information by a higher ideal. It was to be expected, therefore, that a brilliant ethical system, appealing to the best instincts in man, provided it be no direct enemy of Christian ethics, would find in the Catholic Church a hospitable house, though the system itself be a complete foreigner. A study of the life of Catholicism through the centuries reveals an extraordinary sensitiveness in response to all the ethical philosophies of the world: this impressionableness, as we might call it, is a thing to watch and to take into account in our appreciation of Catholic life in history. The motives of action amongst the faithful have been more mixed than their motives of believing. In their moral and practical life Christians have differed less from the children of this world than in their faith. The difficulty has not only been that all men, Christians not excepted, have the common passions and weaknesses of humanity, that all men are sinners. The cause of that comparative uncertainty of outline in ethical conduct has been more subtle: it is so easy to follow axioms in daily life which are true and human and honest though they are not supernatural. Now this has been largely done by the Christian people, though, of course, never exclusively. The Stoic, the Aristotelian, the Neo-Platonist, both in their ancient forms and in their modern

disguises, have had imitators without number amongst Christians ; their maxims are repeated and loved by those who adore Christ and eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. All the generous impulses of the present age find an easy response in the Catholic heart, though those impulses are entirely natural in their origin.

In practice the simple concept that all our ethical life as Christians ought to be, and in fact is, the fruit of the Tree which is Christ, is perhaps the most difficult thing to keep alive except in such milieux as are intensely supernatural, for example, religious Communities. Yet we cannot get away from the primordial fact that all Christians are constantly under the influence of Christ's life and Christ's Spirit ; that their good works are the fruits of a divine Tree. May it not be said that the difference between a prosperous era of Catholicism and one less prosperous lies precisely in this : the power of uniting daily life with Christ and of visualising daily conduct in Him? To do this is genius of the first order, and not all Catholic generations possess it in the same degree. What are the appeals made to Catholics to encourage them to the higher life? what are the motives put before them by the preacher? in whose name are commands given to them, are orders obeyed? This of course is the supreme and infallible

criterion of the true spirituality of any period in Catholicism. If an appeal for the defence of the Holy Sepulchre roused the whole world as one man just because it was for the Sepulchre of Christ, such a world must be judged, by all Christian standards, to have possessed a high spiritual life whatever other appearances might tend to divert our attention from this great fact. If, on the other hand, those very works which Christians are expected to do are asked for by preachers and moralists, not in the Name of Christ but in some other name—even though that name be not an evil one—the standard of supernatural life is lower. If we may read S Paul in the light of these remarks we shall find new meaning in words to which we are habituated; the "measure of faith" is a true rendering of our fundamental idea that even in our spiritual fruitfulness we are under a divine institution: the practice of virtue as much as the sacramental ministration is the mystery of Christ's Covenant. The mercies of the daily Christian life are not vague things but definite operations of Christ's mystical Body. I do not apologise for presenting my reader with the whole twelfth chapter of S Paul's Epistle to the Romans as I should ask him in any case to go to his New Testament in order to see for himself the tree of supernatural life and Christian virtue:

S Paul lays before us as complete a *schema* of ethics in Christ as in another sphere Aristotelian philosophers do with natural ethics.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God. For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to everyone the measure of faith. For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ; and every one members one of another: And having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, either prophecy, to be used according to the rule of faith; Or ministry, in ministering, or he that teacheth, in doctrine; He that exhorteth, in exhorting; he that giveth, with simplicity; he that ruleth, with carefulness; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood: with honour

preventing one another. In carefulness not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope. Patient in tribulation. instant in prayer. Communicating to the necessities of the saints. Pursuing hospitality. Bless them that persecute you : bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice : weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another. Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits. To no man rendering evil for evil. Providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved ; but give place unto wrath, for it is written : Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat ; if he thirst, give him to drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil : but overcome evil by good." (Rom. xii.)

XVIII

THE DIVINE ORDER OF PRAYER

PRAYER has been for a long time the particularly favoured province of the religious individuals. The impression has gained ground more and more that in prayer man leaves the solid realms of the institutional, of the covenanted, to be carried forward towards God on the wings of the spirit. I do not say that people have severed prayer from grace and the supernatural; Catholics, certainly, have been preserved from an error so fatal, but innumerable are the writers whose words convey the impression that they consider prayer to be a thing apart, of a very different kind from the Sacraments, for instance, and the chief differentiation is this, that prayer is a law unto itself, always, of course, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As so much has been said and written from this point of view it may be worth our while to enquire whether prayer, I mean here the supernatural prayer, is really a thing apart, a thing entirely individualistic, a thing of divine inspiration only,

and not a thing of divine institution, in the sense in which we take the term institution in this book, as a synonym for Covenant.

As the first consideration that will be helpful towards the clear understanding of this matter, let us bear in mind a principle which has its application in many other portions of theology and which we have already had occasion to mention. Prayer is what it is through God's Will, through God's good pleasure, through God's acceptance, through God's first advance to man : no act of man, in fact no act of any creature, has in itself the power to bring man nearer unto God or to bring God nearer unto man, unless God has elected in His free will that such a thing should come to pass. When God gives His grace for a definite spiritual result He has, so to speak, willed that result beforehand, and He gives the grace in accordance with that will of His. At no time is it possible for a creature to do anything, in any order of being, unless God, in His universal providence, has predestined the creature for that very act. When we speak of the power of love on the part of man that wins the heart of God, when we speak of the power of prayer that subdues God's omnipotence, as usual, we presuppose much : the divine preparation, the divine attraction, the divine acceptance are things we have to take for granted when we speak thus. Even

Christ Himself could not have redeemed the world with His sacrifice on the Cross unless the Father had previously accepted His great work for that purpose. Though writers in their fervour have told of holy men who had the power of making God do their will, of overcoming God through the might of their prayer, such metaphors are only permissible amongst people who know all the implications and presuppositions of Catholic theology. Prayer of every kind is based on the free gift of God, not only prayer of contemplation but also prayer of intercession. Through our intercession we obtain from God those things for which He wishes that we should ask Him. It is not the psychological effort of the creature that can overcome God : it is the accomplishment of a divine ordinance that enables man to receive things from God in prayer.

This fundamental principle of theology ought to prepare us for a view of prayer in all its aspects which will be more in conformity with the general characteristics of the Christian dispensation. Why should there be a real difference of character between the various classes of spiritual realities? If it could be shown *a priori* that it is possible for prayer, in its fullest and most comprehensive meaning, to be an organised and not an individual thing, our knowledge of the general spirit of

Christianity ought at once to make us find in prayer one of the great dispensations of Christ that have been instituted by Him as clearly and as definitely as the Eucharist.

That there is no intrinsic difficulty against the theory that all the workings of the Holy Ghost in the souls of men are part of a great organic plan may be granted without any contradiction. Is it not in keeping with all we know of the Spirit that vivifies the body of the Church to assume that His action is as much a unifying action as an illuminating action?

"To gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed." (John xi, 52.)

Nothing ought to be easier for us than to conceive of all the inspirations of the Spirit that make souls rejoice in the Lord as being so many notes of one great canticle. S Teresa in Spain, S Philip Neri in Rome, sing the same song of the Spirit, it is one canticle, not two: *Spiritus replevit orbem terrarum, et hoc quod continet omnia, scientiam habet vocis.* (Int. Pent.) We may give even greater extent to this alluring idea, and make the intimate prayer of Christians here on earth part of the universal life of the Church Triumphant. As the Spirit teaches all the elect how to pray with unspeakable vehemence we ought to make a stand against any theories of prayer which would eliminate this

communion of spirits under the action of the Holy Ghost; if the Spirit gives to everyone as He wills, it is for some very great common purpose, the building of the Body of Christ. It is indeed a most Catholic attitude to consider that even the hermit in his remoteness from human things is in the very centre of the Church's life when his heart is merged in prayer. There is no such thing as private prayer except in the very limited meaning of the external setting: the internal setting of all prayer is in the golden streets of the City of God where all souls gather together in great crowds through the omnipresence of the Spirit: *Plateae et muri ejus ex auro purissimo.* Is it not the intention of S Paul to depict that harmonising power of the Holy Ghost who prays in the hearts of all the faithful when he says that the Spirit asks for the saints according to God?

"Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: For, we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth: because he asketh for the saints according to God." (Rom. viii, 26.)

One point is beyond doubt and admits of no controversy: no merely psychological explanation of prayer is of use to the Christian. The natural effort of the mind and the will has no

power in the spiritual world; it is only supernatural prayer to which promises are attached, and the moment we are in the supernatural, the idea of a divine institution is at hand. Prayer is not only a grace from God, prayer is an established *order* of God. Nay more, prayer is part of the Christian economy, is a portion of that certainty in divine things which comes to us in Christ and constitutes the Covenant. It is more important for us to pray in the Spirit of Christ than to be endowed with high mystical gifts outside the order of Christ, if such an hypothesis were at all possible. What I am intent on making clear here is this, that Christ's institution of prayer is something more precious than individual gifts of the Spirit, considered in themselves, and detached from the body of Christ's institution, supposing that such separated gifts were conceivable:

"Hitherto, you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full." (John xvi, 24.)

The Christian ought to pray as he believes, as he eats the Flesh of the Son of God and drinks His Blood, with a certainty that comes not only from the intensity of his supplication but also, and even more, from the fidelity of the divine promise; in other words, from the divine institution.

The Son of God has certainly modified prayer in the sense that He has given to it the full weight of the Incarnation :

" I go to the Father : and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do : that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do." (John xiv, 13, 14.)

It is of greater importance for our spiritual life to remember that in prayer we are fulfilling Christ's loving commandment and carrying out His divine institution than to be experts in spiritual methods. If we forgot the divine institution and trusted to the resources of our mind our mistake would be very grave indeed. The words at Mass are so familiar to us that we fail, perhaps, to see their profound implication : *Praeceptis salutaribus moniti, et divina institutione formati, audemus dicere* : " Taught through precepts of salvation and strengthened through a divine institution, we dare to say " : This wonderful preamble to the *Our Father* contains a world of Christian theology : it is the true attitude of the Catholic Church at prayer. In praying she carries out a precept which is part of her work of salvation, and this is why she is bold in prayer ; she dares to pray, as she dares to believe, because God has made the first advances. All this is very far from the shallow modern

prayer-philosophy which is nothing else, when we come to analyse it, than a department of the science of psychology.

It is characteristic of the true Catholic spirit to attach great importance to all the official praying of the Church : to the public praying, to the praying in set formulae, to the praying with a loud voice, to the singing of the prayer, because in so doing we carry out a divine institution. The tendency for a long time now has been to lay stress on the spirituality of prayer, in the sense that the less there is of the external, of the material, of the vocal in prayer, the more perfect the prayer is. This, of course, could become a very deceptive criterion of prayer, as we might fall into mere naturalism if we pushed this notion of spirituality to its extremes. It is of infinitely greater importance for us in our prayer that we should do the thing in the Name of Christ. Now we know that His expression "In My Name" contains a whole spiritual revolution. It means nothing less than the mystery of man's incorporation in Christ, and this mystery implies the communion of spirit right through the universality of the elect. Vocal prayer itself would be more perfect than mental prayer, to make use of a modern nomenclature, if many men united in vocal prayer expressed their solidarity in Christ more com-

pletely through that community of voice ; their prayer then would be more Christ-like than any ecstasy of the isolated mystic, if (I repeat the hypothesis *ad nauseam*) such a one were to be found.

The *Our Father* is the divine institutional prayer *par excellence*. In it we have Christ's prayer in an almost sacramental form : its petitions are not for the individual directly, but for the brotherhood. The demands it contains are everlasting needs : not one of those requests could ever be superfluous, could ever be against the will of God, in the generality in which it is expressed. No *Our Father* recited with faith by any Christian could ever fail to have its effect. Through every recitation of the Lord's Prayer there is obtained for the universal Church an increase of the things for which we ask ; God's holy Name becomes more glorious : God's kingdom is advanced : God's will is carried out ; the bread of life is multiplied ; sins are remitted ; temptations are avoided ; the Evil One is overcome in some corner of the Church of Christ. For any of us to say or sing the *Pater Noster* with outstretched arms is truly to be the *Christianus orans*. We do not make an effort of the spirit but we exert a right which is ours through Christ's institution.

XIX

CHRISTIAN COMFORT THROUGH THE COVENANT

THE Epistle to the Hebrews marks a definite phase in Christian spirituality: whatever may be the date of its writing one thing seems clear, it came at a period of discouragement which followed great spiritual exhilaration. The Epistle is a reaction against that discouragement: but a reaction of a definite kind. It puts before the faithful high theological notions of permanent importance concerning Christ's Personality, and the writer of the Epistle expects the disheartened Christian to find new comfort in thoughts which, till then, were unfamiliar to him. Reading between the lines, one discovers in the Apostolic writings, both inspired and non-inspired, a phenomenon which is not without its lessons to all later generations; the days of great spiritual exhilaration were followed by vague sentiments of discouragement. Having been inebriated by the Spirit (the word is Scriptural) the early Christians found themselves confronted by practical realities

which palled on their keen sense of the spiritual. It is as a remedy to this initial *acedia*—the dispirited state—that much was written by the Apostles. Above all others, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews showed himself a past master in dealing with the depressions of the brethren. Could it not be said that practically the whole Apostolic literature, I mean the inspired Epistles, has this one purpose, to habituate the minds of the Christians to the great dogmatic facts of the Incarnation and to make them find in those facts the permanent comfort of their faith?

The graces of the Spirit, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, the *charismata* of the Church, were to the early Christian such immediate realities that they needed no emphasising; they were facts, daily occurrences, visible signs, both to the faithful and to the faithless. The only task the Church had to fulfil was to keep order in their very abundance:

"Wherefore, brethren, be zealous to prophesy; and forbid not to speak with tongues. But let all things be done decently and in order." (I Cor. xiv, 39, 40.)

But another duty soon became incumbent on the great teachers of the new faith. They had to show the Christians, both theoretically and practically, that there existed a more excellent

way, more excellent than the *charismata,* more excellent than the consolations of the heart—the way of charity and dogma :

" But be zealous for the better gifts. And I shew unto you yet a more excellent way." (I Cor. xii, 31.)

So we have in the canonical Epistles those great expositions concerning Christ in His immutable mission, as Head of the Church, and as High Priest of God ; concerning the Church as the mystery of God ; concerning charity as the eternal life of God. The whole exhortatory side of the Epistles is devoted to those higher things ; only rarely do the Apostles instruct the faithful to drink more abundantly of the Spirit, whilst their admonitions have one purpose, that of making them reflect over the higher and more permanent issues of their faith.

We could pursue this theme through all the canonical Epistles and even through the Apocalypse ; but our purpose will be sufficiently served by the Epistle to the Hebrews, the scope of which is more pronouncedly a revival of Christian fervour through dogmatic exhortation. The key to the Epistle seems to be the following passage in the fifth chapter :

" Of whom (Christ) we have much to say and hard to be intelligibly uttered : because you are become weak to hear. For whereas for the time

you ought to be masters, you have need to be taught again what are the first elements of the words of God : and you are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every-one that is a partaker of milk is unskilful in the word of justice : for he is a little child. But strong meat is for the perfect : for them who by custom have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil." (Heb. v, 11-14.)

That the writer should profess so frankly that he has still "much to say" about Christ and that what he has to say is hard to be "intelligibly uttered" ought to be an encouragement to the theologian of our own days who finds himself speaking to a generation of Christians who "are become weak to hear." The great things which the writer proposes as unfailing comfort to Christians are those doctrines concerning Christ's priesthood for which the Epistle to the Hebrews is famous. Before the glorious flights of thought in which he treats of the theological issues of the supreme priesthood, the author of the Epistle draws the dark picture of the spiritual estate of some members of the Church at the moment at which he writes :

" For it is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Have moreover tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, And are fallen away : to be renewed again to penance, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and making him a mockery. For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briers is reprobate and very near unto a curse : whose end is to be burnt." (Heb. vi, 4-8.)

Much has been said and written on this gloomy passage ; it has been the classical quotation for many a preacher in order to depict the horrors of faithlessness to grace : it has even been used by heretics with a view to prove that there are sins which cannot be forgiven ; the rigorist has revelled in the lurid sentences. It certainly seems to insinuate that many Christians had fallen into a state of profound depression : the Gospel had lost its virtue for them. Not that the writer neglects to put sufficient light into the picture to make it fit an assembly of Christians who were more discouraged than bad. In fact, as is the case generally with such psychological conditions, those poor people went on doing the works of charity from habit, and the memory of their past good deeds was everywhere.

"But, my dearly beloved, we trust better things of you, and nearer to salvation: though we speak thus. For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work and the love which you have shewn in his name, you who have ministered and do minister to the saints." (Heb. vi, 9, 10.)

As more than one reader might ask here what the true meaning is of the appalling expression, "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and making him into a mockery," it may be sufficient to say that such words do not necessarily express exceptional heinousness of some possible sin committed by those Christians. They have reference in fact to the Christian's faith in the power of the Passion and Death of Christ. In Pauline language to hesitate in any way to attribute to Christ complete and irrrevocable efficiency of salvation is to make His first and historical Crucifixion useless, is to consider that mighty effort an illusion, "a mockery." In his Epistle to the Galatians S Paul uses kindred terms:

"I cast not away the grace of God. For if justice be by the law, then Christ died in vain." (Gal. ii, 21.)

"You are made void of Christ, you who are justified in the law: you are fallen from grace." (Gal. v, 4.)

So profoundly was Paul persuaded of the all-sufficiency of Christ's work on earth that any hesitation of trust in the Son of God was to him like a return to man's unredeemed state, like a demand for another Redemption. If the Christian who at one time had basked in the sunshine of so comprehensive a faith became a doubter, nothing in the world would give him back his sweet experience unless he returned to the redemptive mystery of Christ with deeper understanding and keener appreciation than he possessed before his mind grew weary under the burden of spiritual disillusionment.

The great question, then, is how they are "to be renewed again to penance." The writer declares that it is impossible to be renewed to penance, and he means by this that unless they rise to the consideration of those higher things of which he is about to tell them, they will not find that renewal of the spirit which they seek. It is the spiritual problem of all time : the fervour of youth, the *fervor novitius* or the first fervour, with its special psychological aroma, is a transient thing. No fervour is possible after that, no real penance it to be found any more in the heart of man, unless it come from the contemplation of the high things of Christ.

The theological treatise on Christ's priesthood which is contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews

is a very perfect thing in its blending of the divine institutions of the old and the new Testaments, it is essentially an exposition of the new and eternal Covenant which God has made with man in the Blood of Christ. These great dogmatic facts " we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil." (Heb. vi, 19.) It would exceed the scope of this book to give a full analysis of the Christology of this Epistle : its contents have become the daily language of the Church's Liturgy. The climax is reached with this declaration :

" But this man, offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God, From henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool. For by one oblation he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And the Holy Ghost also doth testify this to us. For after that he said : And this is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give my laws in their hearts and on their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." (Heb. x, 12-17.)

It is more in accordance with my line of thought to point out the intention of the superb theologian who wrote this Epistle. His aim is evidently this : to give to the Christians who were converts from Judaism a new basis of spirit-

ual thought ; he wants to wean them from the old and powerful associations of the synagogue. Moreover he is determined to give such a foundation to their Christian life as will be proof against all sadness, all weariness of the spirit. So we have this touching exhortation, which is highest theology applied to the activities of every day :

" Having therefore, brethren, a confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ : A new and living way which he hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh : And a high priest over the house of God : Let us draw near with a true heart, in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with clean water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (for he is faithful that hath promised) : And let us consider one another, to provoke u ıto charity and to good works." (Heb. x, 19-26.)

In addition to the theology of Christ's Priesthood, the Epistle to the Hebrews has also left a profound mark on Christian thought through its powerful exposition of the nature of Faith :

" Now, faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." (Heb. xi, 1.)

It is as if the author had himself passed

through that experience which is common to all fervent Christians, a fuller and fuller appreciation of that gift which is evidence of things that appear not, in lieu of more experimental states of soul. He gives us, in a famous passage, the triumphant history of that gift of faith which conquers kingdoms, works justice, obtains promises, stops the mouth of lions. It is difficult to resist quoting abundantly from so mature a study of Christian spirituality as is the Epistle to the Hebrews. I do not apologise to my reader for having put before his eyes passages of some length. From beginning to end this wonderful canonical writing is a song of triumph. It produces oneness through all the varieties of grace ; it brings peace to those that are afflicted in their spirit because they seem to have failed ; it makes it abundantly clear that it is possible for every Christian to walk in the high things of God, daily and hourly, on account of the Blood of Christ, by which we enter into the Holy of holies. From whatever angle we may approach the Epistle one thing is beyond all doubt : its spirituality is entirely a spirituality of dogma, not a spirituality of experience or of sentiment. Not that the other spirituality was not known to the writer ; there are enough allusions to make it clear that he knew of it personally. He too had " tasted of the heavenly gift and been made a partaker of

the Holy Ghost." (Heb. vi, 4.) Yet, in the maturity of his life, laying aside every weight of sin, he saw in Jesus above all things "the author and finisher of faith." (Heb. xii, 1, 2.)

XX

ON FORMALISM

THE subject matter of this book makes it imperative that we should study with care the nature of a reproach which is often brought against fixed forms of religion and which, if justified, would unspiritualise much of Catholic life. The reproach is generally expressed in the word "Formalism." It is not an accusation of hypocrisy in religion, which would make the matter of easy treatment; the accusation is of a more subtle kind. The hypocrite, the Pharisee, observes the outward forms of religion with punctiliousness and zeal, whilst in his heart, consciously though secretly, he pursues evil courses. With hypocrisy we have no concern here. The spiritual condition of the formalist is different: he is not a conscious deceiver; he does not make piety the cloak of sin; he is not a whited sepulchre full of every impurity; he is one who through a long usage of the external religious rite has, it is said, lost the spirit of the rite. He may be a sinful man in other ways; he observes, however, the external forms of religion through a conservatism that is part of real goodness; but

he is really far from being a spiritual man though his religious observances are many and, in a way, edifying. Thus described, the formalist is not a man to be encouraged or admired. Formalism, with such a meaning, if it exists anywhere, is a thing to be condemned. The strongest condemnation of it is often read into a passage of Isaias, in the opening verses of that great prophet's message :

" To what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims, saith the Lord? I am full, I desire not holocausts of rams and fat of fatlings and blood of calves and lambs and buck-goats. When you come to appear before me, who required these things at your hands, that you should walk in my courts? Offer sacrifice no more in vain : incense is an abomination to me. The new moons and the sabbaths and other festivals I will not abide : your assemblies are wicked. My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities : they are become troublesome to me. I am weary of bearing them. And when you stretch forth your hands I will turn away my eyes from you : and when you multiply prayer, I will not hear. For your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves : be clean. Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes. Cease to do perversely. Learn to do well. Seek judgement. Relieve the oppressed.

Judge for the fatherless. Defend the widow. And then come and accuse me, saith the Lord. If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow : and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool. If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land. But if you will not and will provoke me to wrath, the sword shall devour you : because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Is. i, 11-20.)

The question may be asked whether Christ in His war against Pharisaism is aiming at formalism as much as at hypocrisy. Modern criticism —which is more the offspring of Puritanism than it knows or would admit—makes Christ the foe of formalism, the determined enemy of lifeless, fossilised institutional forms of religion. I do not think that we can read into the Gospels any intention on the part of Christ to condemn formalism. As such it did not exist in His days, or if it existed, it did not come under Christ's direct reproof. As He was so zealous for the observance of the forms of religion into which He was born, a war against formalism, even if such an idea had been awake in His day, might easily have been misunderstood. Christ in His struggle with Pharisaism was confronted directly with downright, conscious, unattractive hypocrisy.

As I said a moment ago, formalism is easily condemned. None of us would make a stand for it; to say the least, it is a great imperfection in religion. It is a more difficult problem to decide whether accusations of formalism, in definite instances, are always true and merited; whether it has not often happened that mere fidelity to traditional and ancient forms of worship has been held up as dead and lifeless formalism, when after all there was still abundance of life in such traditional religion. We Catholics ought to be more careful than others in levelling the accusation of formalism at definite periods of Church history. We might be tempted to do so simply because we do not see in them certain kinds and manifestations of spirituality and asceticism which are dear to us. Not unfrequently Christianity has been thus classified by critics: the formalism of the Orthodox East, the individualism *à outrance* of the dissenting West, and the sound Catholicism between the two. Such a division, of course, would come from the pen of a Catholic writer; non-Catholic authors in their turn would accuse the whole Roman Church of being in the fetters of a hopeless formalism. Inside the Catholic Church, thinkers belonging to a certain school of spirituality or to a certain epoch of special fervour might easily be inclined to look at the Catholicism of other generations as

being tainted with formalism. We have here, then, a psychological problem of no small interest in mutual appreciation. If there is one very elemental danger to the mind of every man who is keen on a given subject it is this : the utter condemnation of everyone else who is not similarly keen. It is so rudimentary a defect of the human mind that one may truly feel surprised at seeing so many good people fall victims to it. Yet practically all men have to pass through this period of education, and to learn in the days of their fervour that they should not despise those who do not share it. Unless a Catholic historian be thus educated he could become quite incapable of understanding immense tracts of Catholic life in the past, and he could prove as unjust in his appreciation as any protestant writer of history.

The real psychological problem in this matter of formalism would be this : to what extent does a long habit of doing certain external things of religion unspiritualise such acts? The answer is that the acts become unspiritual when they have lost their original religious significance for the mind. The circumstance that such religious rites are used constantly, are used with great familiarity, are used in daily life, and for very long periods, does not constitute formalism. Nor would it be formalism if the people thus using the rites were in other ways not highly moral people,

as long as they understand the true religious implication of the rites they observe. Thus suppose a whole people to be faithful in observance of the great Eucharistic rite, attending Mass not only weekly but daily ; such a population, if otherwise not very perfect in life, could not be accused of formalism as long as Mass was to them what it is to all Catholics, the divine Sacrifice. Formalism there would be then only if they went to Mass as a matter of habit and tradition, without knowing or caring to know what Mass is. The hypothesis of a Catholic people not caring for morality but still remaining faithful to external rites has never had any practical reality. The Catholic people have only severed morality from religion through weakness of nature, never through a definite theory that ethical goodness did not matter.

In an age in which the internal gifts of the Spirit have received such unusual attention as is the case nowadays the danger of seeing formalism in the external and more material practices of Catholicism presents itself with greater insistence than at other times. We might easily become unjust to many generations of our brethren in the past because we see them so busy with the external things of religion such as crusades, pilgrimages, church building. The very stability which Catholicism had acquired in

its external forms from the ninth century onwards, might tend to scandalise certain spirits to whom freshness in religious things is the same as sincerity in them. In this matter some Catholic writers have not been far from joining the ranks of the protestant Puritans. Now if there is one supremely important feature of Catholicism it is the spiritual worth of external things through the power of faith. It is truly immaterial to faith what kind of expression it has; it is equally great, equally noble, equally spiritual, whether its manifestations be in external things or whether they be immanent acts of the mind. It may be said of faith that it transcends the difference of the internal and the external: its power is to see all things in God who is the Creator of heaven and earth. There may be energy of faith in a Catholic people who year after year and century after century observe regularly all the rites and ceremonies of the Church without any alteration or innovation; such apparent monotony of spiritual life would by no means argue absence of true religion or even of personal fervour. Faith, after all, is essentially a thing of stability; its innovations or newnesses could only be accidental; and if we speak of new movements of religion inside the Church we can never mean anything more than a fresh psychological approach to the unchanging elements of the

Catholic faith. Moreover, one Christian generation begets the next generation not only in the sense of the propagation of the species but more truly still through the communion of spirit. The great movements, as they are called, are initiated by men who do not seem to move at all, and at no time is the Church without the desire and the effort after perfection.

The experimental fervours of the spirit are rare things, exceptional events, even in the lives of the holy ones : we cannot depend on them in order to have the assurance that we are doing the work of God, that the Spirit is powerful in us. We have a much more certain voice to tell us what is God's work and what is not. The vineyard into which we are sent has its definite occupations ; we are most spiritual when we do the ordinary tasks of Catholic life, tasks which are set before us by the Master of the vineyard. No greater error could creep in amongst us than to think disparagingly of the fixed and set practices of Catholic life for the sake of those more personal spiritual endeavours of which we are the satisfied witnesses in our own inner life. We have received through Christ not only the Spirit but also a life. We possess the " Way of the Lord," as the Apostles call it, the great traditional Catholic life, with its Liturgy, with its external charities, with all its manifold manifesta-

tions of the faith. To do these things is not formalism, it is truly the "Way of the Lord." (Acts xviii, 25.)

XXI

THE TWO TENDENCIES

IT is now time to consider how Christian generations have behaved in practice towards that great thing which is the subject of this book, the new and eternal Covenant. Has there not been a constant superimposition of new Catholic thought of a free and easy nature on the adamantine rock of classical theology? Have not forms of piety which are more individualistic, more humanistic, swamped the older forms of exact worship? To this study the present chapter is dedicated.

The spiritual history of Catholicism might be truly considered as an interplay of two tendencies on a gigantic scale. The scale indeed is so vast and the tendencies are so strong that it might appear to the eyes of the unwary that he is dealing with two opposite spirits, equally potent, but irreconcilable in their claims. The two elements which are thus at play are, on the one hand, faith in an established, unalterable power of sanctification, and, on the other, active and even experimental sanctity. To make this matter

quite clear with one well-known instance : the spirit of Christian penance and the works of Christian penance, or in other words, the deeds of personal repentance in the Church, have been vast beyond words ; they are like a flood carrying everything before it. So great has been the spiritual gift of repentance that it would seem that there is no room for sacramental penance, for a power of cleansing that is quite separate and perfectly distinct from the tears of sorrow which the Christian generations have shed over their sins. And yet remission of sins through authority, or as we say technically, through the power of the Keys, is a thing as great in Church history as those fruits of personal penitence which are found in the life of every Christian who fears God and His judgements. What I call the interplay of diverse tendencies is found chiefly in this, that no effort is spared to incite sinners to do penance, yet never for a moment does the Church abandon her stable doctrine that all sins committed after Baptism sooner or later have to be submitted for absolution to her power of the Keys.

Is it not failure to perceive this double claim of Catholicism that has brought about all the schisms and heresies ever since the year one thousand? I take that year as a starting point because all the medieval heresies, long before

protestantism—and they were great and powerful heresies—have had this thing in common, a decided, nay, an arrogant, turning away from institutional and covenanted sanctity to pretended or real efforts at personal sanctification. Institutional sanctity has always fared badly; it has generally been at a great disadvantage; it is a thing that gives scandal because it has been possible for those who were firm believers in institutional sanctity to be without personal virtue. Now nothing is more natural to man than to despise abstract claims which apparently are so little justified in practical life. It is this scandal which has been the great downfall of Western Christianity; for reasons not easily explained Eastern Christianity seems less open to it. The great spiritual claims of the Catholic Church, as Church, must be maintained; at no time can we surrender the least particle of them. We give the holiest names to all her various forms of administrative power; we proclaim the intangible sanctity of her sacramental life; at the same time, sins have abounded in the Church and in her ministers; in the very midst of the Sacraments there have been scandals to an extent which at times has made the saints cry out to God to implore Him to visit His Church to chastise and purify her. This is the true *oportet venire scandala,* the unavoidable evil, the great conflict,

not between theory and practice but between two lives actually accepted and carried out, the life of faith, on the one hand, and the individual personal life of weak mortals on the other. With us Christians, scandal is not indeed an opposition between theory and practice, such an opposition would be easily glossed over by the human conscience, but an opposition between two existences, each of which is not a thing of abstract theory but of fierce reality: that men should profess complete faith in the vast claims of Catholicism and yet should find it possible to lead unholy lives. How this scandal has eaten itself into the consciousness of the modern generations would be a study in itself. Such a study would reveal the true origin of that omnipresent fallacy which makes the task of dogmatic Christianity so difficult in our days, the saying that it does not matter what a man believes provided he acts well. In the East, as I suggested, such a fallacy has not found a home.

The duality of tendency of which we are speaking in this chapter is best illustrated in two fundamental facts of the Christian dispensation: in the mystery of Redemption and in the sacramental mystery. No doubt, at root these two mysteries are one and the same reality, but for the sake of clearness they will be treated separately here.

By Redemption I mean that work of the God-Man by which we are sanctified and raised up to eternal life. That our whole higher life comes from Christ, or better still, from Christ's redemptive work, we all admit readily. There are times, perhaps, in the inner life of each one when this consideration of Christ's redemptive work forces itself on the consciousness with ever-growing clarity of perception ; we feel keenly at such times that we have been purchased with a great price : the nothingness of all human endeavour appals us ; the Blood of Christ, not anything we can do, makes all the difference between hope and despair in our hearts ; we seem to have almost touched perdition with our fingers and in an irresistible rebound of our spirits we throw ourselves on the Cross and cling to it as the shipwrecked mariner clings to the raft. We see at such times the futility of all human justice, the emptiness of all human goodness. The sinfulness of the world does not, at such moments, dismay us, because Christ's sanctity outweighs it as a mountain would outweigh a handful of dust. Such periods are indeed days of triumph for the Christian faith, at least in our minds. We look into the future with confidence and we take the ultimate victory of Christ for an absolute certainty. We hardly think of ourselves and of our work in moments of such

exhilaration. Except that we are keenly alive to the necessity of walking worthily of the God who has called us into His wondrous light we do not further analyse our own spiritual state at times like these.

There are again other periods when we behave quite differently ; the Cross of Christ is, of course, firmly planted on the shore, but we are struggling against evil in the billows of life ; we enter deeply into all the complexities of our personal life ; our own deeds, not those of Christ, are our chief preoccupation ; what the Son of God has accomplished may be to us a pattern and a source of strength, but truly it is our own course that is the great drama. At such times the sins of men make us very sad ; they are an awful reality ; we tremble for the stability of the Kingdom of God ; our spiritual prospects are gloomily dark and we have no difficulty in thinking of Christ Himself as of One who is still persecuted and trodden under foot by man. The human has overpowered us, both in its goodness and in its evil. We develop the study of human sanctity to an astonishing degree ; we press into service all the speculations of wise men concerning vice and virtue ; we call to our assistance psychology itself. We make an elaborate science of prayer, its methods and its degrees ; in fact, it would seem that we are travelling further

and further away from that simple conviction which helped us at other times, that Christ does everything for us ; we are no longer describing a circle round the central mystery of Christ's Redemption ; on the contrary, like the sun in his annual course, we go far out into space ; we seem to have left the concentric influences of the main celestial body and it looks as if we are moving right away into infinitude, never to return to the redeeming Christ. But orthodox Catholic sanctity always comes back, however elongated the parabola may be which it has followed in pursuit of subjective virtues. Yet the fact is there : not only individuals but whole generations of Christians have differed in this great matter : the mighty truths of Christ's Redemption have been preponderantly to the fore at one time, whilst at another time Christians have been absorbed by the labour of personal sanctification.

There is, it is needless to say, a conciliation between the conflicting elements. It is to be found in the faith that goes with us everywhere, that all our good works come from Christ, that He is the Vine and that we are the branches, that all our deeds of grace are the fruits of the tree of the Cross. If such a conviction were not with us, at least latently, we should not be Catholics any more. The difference is not in the things which are in us sub-consciously, but in

the actual realisation of facts. Thus one generation of Christians is more constantly and more clearly aware of the supreme factor of Christ's redemptive power, whilst other generations seem to possess a special grace for doing the works of the Kingdom of God. If the two tendencies ever were to separate, you would have heresy of a most dangerous type. How this actually happened at the Reformation and how the Council of Trent endeavoured to bring back the harmony of the two elements is a matter of much interest to the student of Christian thought.

The same duality is very evident in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church ; and this in two ways : the Sacraments themselves postulate a vast amount of the personal effort : there is the *opus operantis* and there is the *opus operatum,* a strictly definable, though in a way a very complicated combination of personal effort and of divine institution. Again we have the Church's own liturgical additions to the divine formulæ of the Sacraments. Taking first this latter instance of that duality of which we are speaking, it is surprising to what extent the Christian Church has taken liberties with those simple elements of divine powers which were instituted by Christ—the sacramental things. To begin with Baptism ; in its initial form it is a rite of supreme simplicity ; a short formula with the obvious act

of pouring water on the catechumen. Every Christian believes that in this elemental presentation the Sacrament of regeneration has its full spiritual effect; that it makes all the difference between life and death in the spiritual order. But when we come to the Church's practical behaviour the story is very different. Not only has she added rites of her own to the primitive rite instituted by Christ, but she actually multiplies prayers in order to obtain from God that spiritual regeneration of the candidate which is the proper and infallible effect of the Sacrament and which the Sacrament will produce whether the Church supplicates for it or not. Here we have an apparent overlapping of spiritualities. The personal spirituality of the Church seems to claim the power to do that which belongs properly to the sacramental spirituality. Of this overlapping the traditional administration of the Sacraments is full, so that at times the impression might be created that the Church in the administration of the Sacraments uses liturgical prayers which were composed by men whose faith was not in the power of the Sacrament but in the power of the Church's prayer.

This could be easily elaborated *ad infinitum* by taking the rituals of all times and going through one Sacrament after another. The important point to remember in order to see the

full force of this concurrence of ecclesiastical invocation and sacramental operation is this, that it is not the recipient of the Sacrament who multiplies his prayers before approaching the divine thing, it is the minister, it is the Church in her official capacity that heaps invocation upon invocation, imploring God in His mercy to grant those spiritual effects which we know to be the infallible results of the Sacraments, as such. It is not my purpose here to justify the Church's behaviour, to show how there is no lack of sacramental faith in the great rites and rituals of the Catholic Church. The question may be asked whether the Sacrament in itself is affected by the prayers of the Church, is made richer, is made more effective. Without presuming to settle a question so recondite I should feel inclined to say that the Sacrament itself becomes a thing of greater abundance of life through the Church's subsidiary prayer. For the moment I am more interested in what I might call the Church's psychology, which does not permit her to leave the Sacraments in their elemental jejuneness : she herself must do the thing of God in her own way ; Christ has given her such an instinct for the sacramental grace that she can act the whole thing in a fashion which is all her own. Yet not for one moment does she lose sight of the pearl of great price, the Sacrament itself, which she

has received from Christ, and which her own rites, her own sacramental genius, enshrines in every precious thing she can lay her hand on.

The same phenomenon is, if possible, even more striking in the mystery of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Nothing is more simple than this dread mystery taken in its elemental, in its divine stage : the words of consecration spoken over bread and wine, with the partaking by the priest of the consecrated Elements, constitute in its essence, the Eucharistic sacrifice. But how different is the Catholic Mass ! There is truly no end to the liturgical possibilities of Mass. Not only does the Church multiply prayers and intercessions and exhortations to surround the Eucharistic mystery ; this we should expect. But what is more surprising is this, that the Church uses sacrificial formulæ which are of her own composition, which cannot affect in any way the Eucharistic Sacrifice in itself, yet which are grave and solemn, as grave and solemn as any sacrificial words ever used by patriarch or prophet. This overlapping of sacrificial formulæ in the Christian Sacrifice is, to my thinking, the most remarkable instance of that spirit of the Church which prompts her to add as much as she can of her own to the divine gift.

I must say a word now on a more technical point of theology : the concurrence of the *opus*

operans and the *opus operatum* in sacramental life. With these two expressions we mean that in every Sacrament—taking the Sacrament now in its exclusive, divine meaning—there is a profound duality of effects, or rather, of causes towards the same effect; God does something and man does something, and what is more, the action of God, the divine result, is shaped by the human action, so that, for instance, the Catholic who receives Holy Communion with greater Charity not only has the merit of his greater Charity, but the Sacrament itself, the Body of Christ, operates in him more powerfully than would be the case in the less fervent communicant. Put thus as a general principle this portion of Catholic theology is quite comprehensible and clear. It is the working out of Christ's golden maxim, repeated by Him more than once:

"He that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath." (Matt. xiii, 12.)

When we come to the interacting of the two powers, personal grace and sacramental grace, we have no means, of course, of analysing it in all its details; we must be content with the general principle, and excess is to be avoided at both ends. The personal co-operation may be

exaggerated to such an extent as to make the recipient of the Sacrament appear to be the sole meritorious cause of the sacramental grace. Or, on the contrary, the Sacraments may be received with an indifference that deprives them of the dignity even of a moral act. The Church's practical policy has truly been an unceasing oscillation between the two extremes and a constant selection of emphasis. At one time she lays stress on the sacramental efficiency, at another gives preponderance to the necessity for the faithful to approach holy things holily. At no time has the Church relaxed her grasp on either of the two positions ; in her right hand she is holding the Sacrament ; in her left, the rod of discipline that purifies her children and makes them worthy partakers of the mysteries of the Covenant.

XXII

ONENESS IN DIVERSITY

IT would not be a fair treatment of my great subject if I were to neglect those aspects of the matter which seem to contradict my main thesis, I mean departures in practical Christian life, not on the part of the dissident, but on that of the devout Catholic, from that classicism of the Covenant which is so dear to me.

The varieties of the external expression of the Catholic faith through the centuries are things of profoundest interest for the student of religion and for theologians. Perhaps there is no subject which has received greater attention in our days from critics of religious evolution than the apparent modifications of religious sentiment inside the Catholic Church. Volumes have been written on this matter, and more volumes could be written. If I venture to take up the question at this point of our study I cannot pretend, of course, to give an exhaustive survey of the varieties of devotional expression inside the unchanging Catholicism ; all I can attempt to do here is to lay down a few principles which

may help the reader to visualise those modifications in due perspective and proportion. It is more in keeping with the main theme of this book to show how little variation there is than to enumerate examples of it. It is part of that spirit of discrimination which is innate in Catholicism to attach only relative importance to phenomena which are evidently the fruits of time while rendering supreme importance to those which are the fruits of the Spirit. Discernment between these two causes, time and the Spirit, is not the gift of all men.

There are two kinds of modification inside the Catholic faith : there is the dogmatic development, and there are the temperamental, the sentimental, or, if we prefer the word, the imaginative variations. The former modification—I use the word here deliberately, in the vague sense of any true happening—we need not analyse here more extensively ; the temperament of the Catholic people is hardly affected thereby as inherently it possesses a dogmatic aloofness. Dogmatically Catholicism advances slowly, in fact, has advanced very little, whilst temperamentally the changes have seemed at times prodigious and far in excess of any dogmatic development.

Dogmatic stability has its counterpart in liturgical stability, in the things that are truly the

rites of the Church. Though changes there have been in Liturgy, such changes have been relatively insignificant. The Roman Mass of to-day differs little, when all is said, from the Roman Mass of the earlier centuries ; it has not altered for over a thousand years and if we went to the East we should find even greater liturgical stability ; whereas the temperamental changes that have occurred in the same period are in a way far-reaching. The Liturgy of the Church is the practical expression of dogma and it follows dogmatic movements, not temperamental ones. The same Latin Mass which contains, besides the divine mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, a full system of spirituality, satisfies equally the monk of the ninth century, the crusading knighthood of the eleventh, the fervid friar of the thirteenth, the polished humanist of the fifteenth, the clergy of the Council of Trent, the faith's champion of the sixteenth and the missionary of the twentieth century. Such a phenomenon alone ought to make us careful in attaching too much importance to the so-called variations of Catholic piety.

The intellectual temperament of Catholicism is practically unaltered and unalterable. This is best shown by the fact that every day in our theological schools we peruse the doctrinal literature of the Church of all periods with utmost ease

and complete understanding. We are at home with the Schoolmen ; we are at home with the Fathers ; none of their speculations sound strange in our ears ; and though we may not always accept the conclusions of the doctors of those ages gone by, we understand their point of view perfectly well ; we are essentially kindred minds. Even when we smile at the naiveness of past ages our smile is like the indulgent one of those who listen to the babblings of their own brothers and sisters. There was a freshness in the times of the Fathers which has an endless charm for us. When we speak of there having been temperamental changes in Catholicism we do not mean a difference of intellectual interest. It may be laid down as a defendable proposition that the intellectual interest of Catholicism has been the same in all ages.

When I speak here of the dogmatic stability of Catholicism I mean by implication the whole ethical life of Catholicism, which may be considered, for all practical purposes, as part of the dogma. The question arises whether the ascetical life of the Church, as distinguished from the merely ethical, also possesses such stability. The answer is in the affirmative. Taken in their general principles the ascetical teachings of the Church in the fourth century—for it is in the fourth century that Catholic asceticism appears

as a world-wide, universally accepted power—are the ascetical tenets of our own day. And the same holds good of what may be described as the mystical life of Catholicism, the life of prayer. Thus nothing would be easier than to compose a complete treatise on prayer from the works of S Augustine and we should understand the mystical doctrines of the Bishop of Hippo as easily as one of the letters on the spiritual life by S Francis of Sales.

Where then are those variations of religious expression inside Catholicism? How do Catholic generations differ? That in reality they do not differ profoundly appears to be clear from what has just been said. The existence, however, of certain differences is beyond doubt; it is an historical fact. Some people would say that the differences are mostly in what might be called the devotional side of Catholicism. At one time one form of devotion is dominant whilst at other times other forms prevail; but this would be a very incomplete explanation of the phenomenon. There are many centuries in the life of Catholicism from which the devotional element, as we understand it to-day, is almost completely absent; and yet those centuries have pronounced character of their own. Thus we could hardly speak of the fourth century of the Church as being conspicuous for special

devotion, nor again of the eleventh century nor the sixteenth ; yet these three centuries, in spite of the absence of a prevailing devotion, differ considerably in religious temperament. It would be truer to say that the nineteenth century is the century of devotions, in that more restricted sense of the word, and that in this very peculiarity is to be found its special temperament. In fact, one is tempted to suspect the exactness of much of our reading of the earlier forms of Catholicism precisely because, having been nurtured in a temperature of intense devotion, we have become less able to sympathise with the ways of former ages. I may be permitted to venture the remark that the Catholic of the sixteenth century probably understood his brother of the fifth century better than we understand either of them.

I feel inclined to make all variations in Catholicism conterminous with variations in civilisation. There is a way of expressing religious things which is proper to each civilisation, and this difference by no means touches the substance of the faith. That humanity has a succession of temperamental phases of more or less profundity and duration is, of course, obvious. Catholicism, being mankind's best religion, being indeed the only religion provided by God for mankind as a race, must be

capable of that temperamental adaptability. There ought to be something new religiously as the generations of men are new temperamentally. But just as human nature always remains the same under all forms of civilisation and temperament, so likewise Catholicism remains the same under its external variations.

It may be said that the Spirit is the Author of those new forms of religious sentiment, because the Spirit knows man better than man knows himself. The Spirit in the Christian child is, in one sense, the same as that in the man into whom the child has grown ; in another sense it is a different Spirit altogether, because the grace of the child differs in some ways from the grace of the grown-up man. So likewise the Spirit of one generation of Christians is the same as the Spirit of a former or a later generation. But there again the Spirit who is said to have knowledge of men has varieties of graces for varieties of races :

"The spirit of understanding . . . (who is) gentle, kind, steadfast, assured, secure, having all power, overseeing all things, and containing all spirits, intelligible, pure, subtile." (Wisdom vii, 23.)

Like everything else in human nature, temperament is under divine Providence both in nature and in grace.

To sum up : I feel reluctant to attach much importance to the famous variations of religious expression inside Catholicism. More has been said about them than is warranted by the stern historical facts. The romantic way of writing history has given us most gratuitously periodical Pentecosts, as if the Spirit had been poured out anew in a way never known before. With the multiplication of a certain type of literature our own age has succeeded in believing itself more profoundly different from other ages than need be. We have amplified enormously the external expression of pieties that are specifically our own, and the very mass of that religious literature has created an impression of relative unfamiliarity with the past ages of Catholic temperament which is not real.

The innovation which is most remarkable in modern times in the external religious expression of the Catholic faith is certainly the Eucharistic cult. This is all the more remarkable, as in this case we are dealing with the most permanent element in the new and eternal Covenant which God has made with man. Let us take as a well-known instance the institution—for as such it may now be regarded—of the international Eucharistic Congress, which is held at least biennially in some great city of the globe with all the splendour at the command of a wealthy

capital. It would seem that nothing in the attitude of the Catholics, say of the fifth century, towards the Eucharistic mystery could have any affinity with celebrations like those at the Congress at Chicago or at Sydney. This instance of the Eucharistic cult may well serve here as a classical case to make clear the contention of this chapter, that there is oneness in all the variations of the manifestation of our faith. The things that happen at those huge gatherings of believing men and women are truly not different from the more simple and more primitive behaviour of earlier generations of believers. Everything is done on a larger scale, but the same things are done which were always known in Catholic practice. When it is a question of the external expression of a spiritual notion we are well advised if we accept implicitly certain dicta of the perennial philosophy of mankind. One such dictum is the following: *Plus au minus non mutant substantiam rei*: More or less does not alter the essence of the thing. The scale on which a thing is done ought not to be considered as affecting the inward and permanent nature of the thing done. If a Greek play is perfect in its expression and in its setting, the number of actors and the splendour of the scenery may alter, but the play is already perfect when presented under more limited and primitive circumstances.

Or, to come nearer home, a Passion play may be very beautiful if performed by a few devout members of a confraternity, though we all admire the wonderful acting of a whole population of believing mountaineers in Bavarian uplands. The day on which the Church lifted up the consecrated Elements for adoration and worship after the sacramental consecration of Bread and Wine on her altar, she admitted, in theory and principle, the Corpus Christi procession of the wealthiest Catholic city in the world. The substance of the rite is already in the Elevation, nay, even in the little Elevation, at Mass. Whatever takes place in the centuries to come concerning the worship of the Eucharistic Elements is only a matter of *plus aut minus,* more or less. The civilisation of the time being will press into service its own resources ; the religious imagination, the humanism, the sentiment of the period will express themselves freely and originally. Through it all there is as great continuity, not only of faith but even of essential worship, as there is continuity in the building of the Anglo-Saxon church and the last Gothic Cathedral.

Those powerful movements which affect the Church's executive powers more directly are no exception to this law of oneness in variety. The coming of fresh religious Orders could never be considered as the coming of fresh religious

ideals ; there could be no *novitas* in the Church. Is not *novitas* in ecclesiastical language the same thing as heresy? *Novatores* is the name given to all those who have afflicted the Church through their dissensions and rebellions ; in England protestantism was commonly called the "new learning" in the sixteenth century. New ideals are never the cause of renovation, but new men are raised up in God's providence to embrace with fresh fervour the ideals that were astir ; it is one of the most significant facts in this line of thought that at the period of the Catholic Counter-Reformation the universal cry was this : return to the primitive fervour, return to the ideals of the founders. The literature of the religious Orders without exception is wonderfully interchangeable. There is a community of spirit and life, of practice and purpose amongst the various Foundations which would surprise the superficial critic. The accidental differences in the Orders of all times are as nothing compared with their agreements in essential things. Inside the same spiritual family there are variations which a casual observer might think considerable, as the institution adapts itself to the varied civilisation which it lives in and from which it is recruited. Most monks are the children of their own age ; yet at a distance of many centuries there is perfect similarity of out-

look in the true things of the Spirit amongst the men who profess the more perfect life.

With the modern infatuation for the doctrine of evolution everywhere, the historian of religion has to be doubly careful lest he fall a victim to prevailing mannerisms in dealing with facts. Quite frankly, the word evolution should not be applied to Catholicism, as the word has been finally appropriated to signify transformism and has no real meaning for a faith that is always complete and needs no further improvement either from within or without. We should give other names to those surface variations which we admit. Let us call them, in the Pauline phrase, "diversities of graces," though even such a term stands obviously for a definite set of supernatural manifestations. Paul himself could be taken as the personification of that genius of the faith which at times seems to be all for the surface of things, seems to pour itself out in almost flimsy and ephemeral phantasies and sentimentalities, only to come back, like a tidal wave, to its native depths :

"To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all." (I Cor. ix, 22.)

A more careful study of the spiritual life of every Christian generation right through the centuries will confirm in our minds the gratifying

realisation that at every period the Church had a wonderful consciousness of her own great ministry. She did the work which it was possible for her to do at the time ; she had an exceedingly clear perception of the vital things of Christianity ; above all, her Christology was highly developed and her sacramental system fully known and used ; there were no doubts as to the ethical and mystical principles underlying her practical sanctity. This is a truly astonishing phenomenon when one remembers how in secular history continuity of any one ideal is a thing hardly ever to be met with. The stream of Catholic sanctity flows uninterruptedly through all the centuries, and we are committing a grave disloyalty to our faith if we refuse to see the glories of supernatural life in the men of other times and other manners because in some accidental way their psychology is not ours. We must also remember that in the dispensations of divine providence they were deprived of those gifts of nature, of those material adjuncts which lend splendour and charm to the religious ages that came after. The wonder is—and the thoughtful historian never ceases to wonder at it —in that efficacy and that success with which the mighty Roman Church carried on her world-wide administration in those days when sheer lack of the material means of intercourse should

have immobilised everything. But the unity of faith being essentially the gift of God it is supremely independent of the modes of human progress.

XXIII

OLD AND NEW IN EUCHARISTIC WORSHIP

IN a former chapter I have had occasion to mention the Eucharistic worship of Catholicism as a classical instance of the all-pervading oneness of thought and faith through every variation of external expression of religion. In order now to meet objections against the immovable nature of the elements of the new Covenant I propose to enter more fully into this subject. That such a study is of supreme importance is evident from the very nature of the consideration, the Eucharist being the centre of life in the Church of God.

The celebration of the divine Sacrifice has not really altered; though Mass or the Eucharistic Liturgy may have varied to a certain degree, on the whole, and when seen in due proportion those differences are not considerable. But great things have happened in the Church's dealings with the Eucharistic Elements in the space of time that elapses between the consecration and the consuming of the Elements by the priest and the faithful in Communion. We must

always remember this pivotal fact in Eucharistic theology, that at all times and everywhere the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ in the Eucharist must be eaten and must be drunk sooner or later by a Christian ; there is no other known way of consummating the Sacrament. There are just a few instances on record when the consecrated Bread was put in the mouth of the dead Christian, who was buried with It : but such a practice has received universal condemnation, as being contrary to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. The Eucharist is essentially a Sacrifice in which the Things offered up must be eaten and must be drunk by those whom the Sacrifice concerns ; their full participation in the Sacrifice is to eat of It and to drink of It.

It is therefore in this interval between the essential Sacrifice and the sacrificial Banquet that all the changes in Eucharistic worship have taken place ; there are no other instances of variation. Three important steps are to be considered : worship of the consecrated Elements, reservation of the consecrated Elements, and consumption of the consecrated Elements entirely outside the sacrificial rite : under these three headings everything in the most modern of Eucharistic devotions can find a place. The adoration of the consecrated Bread and Wine

does not constitute the Eucharistic Sacrifice: this is evident to everyone; yet there never seems to have been a time when adoration and in fact every kind of external and internal worship was not bestowed on the divine Elements in the act of the Sacrifice. That this adoration must take place before Communion is, of course, evident from the very nature of the Eucharist, as through Communion the sacred Things cease to be. The point at issue is the length of time during which the Church keeps her sacred Treasure before consuming It, just for the sake of giving It glory, just with a view of mystical union with the hidden Deity by prayer and contemplation. For it has to be taken for granted that for a long time past the Church has kept the Eucharist in her Tabernacles, has reserved It, not only for the sake of providing for the dying Christian the Bread of Life, but with the direct intention of worship and mystical union in prayer. But when once we admit that the holy Things of the Eucharistic Sacrifice are not all consumed at the altar itself during the divine rite, we have admitted in principle that immense modern latitude of Eucharistic practice which at first sight seems to be a departure from the ways of the ancient Church. Provided the Body and the Blood of Christ be eaten and drunk some day, it matters little when that takes place; the

Eucharistic Sacrament transcends time and space. Whenever those holy Things are partaken of by the faithful, even were it long after the Mass at which They were consecrated, this would intrinsically imply a partaking of the Sacrifice, an eating from the Table of the Lord, a drinking from the Cup of the Lord. This connexion of the sacramental Communion with the Sacrifice, wherever and whenever it takes place, cannot be severed by the will of man ; it is *in natura rei,* in the very nature of the Eucharistic mystery. In the meantime we go on adoring That which has been left from the Sacrifice as the priest adored It when he genuflected at the altar immediately after the Consecration. We are not doing a new thing, we are not doing an extra thing, we are repeating the act that was done at the altar. It would not even be right to call the modern devotion of the Eucharist, such as Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, extra-liturgical ; this might convey the idea that we did with the Eucharist something foreign to the Mass ; the adoration at Benediction is essentially the same act as the adoration at Mass, though instead of taking place before the priest's Communion it takes place after. Whether this "after" be five minutes or five days makes no difference : we are dealing with a divine Thing that is above time and space.

Now it is evident that every one of those steps I mentioned has been, in some elemental way, part of the Church's treatment of the Eucharist from the very beginning. Reverence for the Eucharistic Elements, reservation of the Eucharistic Elements after the conclusion of the official rite of Mass, and partaking of those Eucharistic Elements outside Mass, nay, even away from Church, these things do not imply that there is an act in the Eucharistic behaviour of the Church which is not essentially, intrinsically connected with the mystery of the Sacrifice which is the very essence of the Eucharist.

The crux of this matter lies in the practice of not consuming all the consecrated Elements at the altar at Mass, that is, at the time which would make the Communion a part of that rite of which the consecration is the principal act. But this distribution of Communion away from the altar, away from the Church, after the conclusion of the rite at the altar, is so ancient and so universal that it may be considered a primitive institution and to belong to the fulness of the Eucharistic mystery. The separation or interval once taken for granted, there are no possible limits to the practical applications of this divinely-given liberty. Suppose that at the Last Supper Christ had sent the Bread which He had broken and the Cup which He had blessed to His holy

Mother waiting for It in another room, or even in another house, such an act of His would have been most immediately connected with the Sacrifice of the Last Supper, yet through the interval of time and space, small as it might have been, Christ would have given us the lead for all the liberty and spaciousness of conduct in Eucharistic devotion which is permitted to us for our consolation.

It is for historians to gather up all these scattered fragments of evidence which go to show how, from the earliest times, the consecrated Elements, and more commonly the consecrated Bread, were taken away from the Altar where the Sacrifice had taken place, and how they were sent round from Church to Church as the token of charity and oneness of faith. Fragmentary as the testimonies are, they are numerous enough and instructive enough to make it certain that the extra-sacrificial use of the Eucharist is Apostolic in its origin. It is for the theologian to prove from the nature of the Eucharistic mystery that the diversities in that use are, in a way, merely superficial and of no greater importance than, say, the difference between the Latin and the Greek Mass of to-day. For though at first sight it would seem that when the Greeks celebrate their Liturgy they do a very different thing from the Latins at their Mass, yet but little

observation is necessary to find out the fundamental identity between the two rites. I think that it is a matter of great importance for all of us to divest ourselves of the impression that profound changes have taken place in the Eucharistic piety of Catholics. The changes are perhaps more in our wording, in our way of describing things, than in the realities themselves. A real modification would be if outside the official rite of Mass the Eucharist were to be considered as no longer having any sacrificial meaning. This of course can never be the case, as it would be against the constitutional principle of the Eucharist. Wherever and whenever the Christian eats the divine Flesh or drinks from the precious Cup he shows forth the Death of the Lord : when he adores the divine Bread reserved in the Tabernacle he adores the Body that is offered up in Sacrifice. At no time can we deprive the adorable mystery of the Lord's Body of the sacrificial qualification. Long after the act of the Sacrifice, the Elements of the Sacrifice are still with us. We need not advert to it every time we prostrate before the divine Presence in the Christian Tabernacle : we may for long periods dwell on the infinitely sweet mystery of Christ's Person hidden under the appearance of bread ; we may even give glory to Christ in the Eucharist in an absolute sense, that is to say,

just worship Him as the God in our midst. Provided we never exclude positively from our Eucharistic thought and language that all-important element of the Sacrifice that has been immolated and of which the consecrated Host in the Ciborium still remains with us, we do not commit ourselves to any "*novitas*" in doctrine; we are at one with the earlier Christians who may have thought more habitually of sacrifice in connexion with Eucharist than we do. To keep well in mind this essential connexion between the Eucharistic Elements and the Sacrifice that produced Them at the consecration is, I think, the one theological notion that fuses into perfect harmony all the diversities, such as they are, which exist in the use and the worship of the Eucharist in the extra-sacrificial sphere. As already insinuated, I prefer the word extra-sacrificial to the term extra-liturgical because I consider that whatever we do in love and reverence with the blessed Eucharist is true Liturgy, true worship of a Thing that belongs to the essence of the new and eternal Covenant. The term extra-sacrificial is more accurate, though in view of what I have said myself it ought not to be pressed too far, as I maintain all along the radical connexion between the consecrated Elements and the divine Sacrifice that produced Them. Yet the act of sacrifice is a

definite act, separable from all other acts, as in the old Law the slaying and the immolation of the victim was quite different from the religious rites which enabled man to partake in holiness of the flesh of the victim that remained after the holocaust.

There are other variations in the Eucharistic life of the Church which are matter for the student of religious practices : they are chiefly concerned with the frequency of celebrating and communicating in various centuries. Such diversities, however, do not really affect what we might call the internal treatment of the Eucharist, they represent only the external approach of the faithful to It. The Celebration of Mass, as everybody knows, has been more constantly and more uniformly frequent than the reception by the faithful of Holy Communion, either at Mass or outside Mass. There are great curves on the chart of frequency of Communion through the ages. This very inequality in the habits of the Christian people is extremely significant in theology, as through it is brought home to us most forcibly the sacramental character of the Eucharist. Being a Sacrament and a Sacrament of the living, its use is of necessity a matter which cannot be settled by any *a priori* principles ; there is a freedom in this holy work as in every other holy work which is more

a matter of supererogation that of absolute necessity. It would be most dangerous to put down to lack of fervour the relative infrequency of lay Communion at certain periods, as we know that even canonised saints at such times went to Holy Communion much more rarely than we do in our own days. It is, of course, not to be denied that more than once absence of piety was the principal cause of such infrequency ; but it would not follow that even in such cases there was complete indifference to the faith and its obligations. Communion being a Sacrament of the living, it may be considered as one of the good works put at the disposal of the Christian ; that it should be almost the principal good work of Catholics at one time is quite admissible, whilst at other times the faithful abounded in other good works, such as prayer and great deeds of austerity. We ought to bear in mind that the paramount thing for the Christian is this : to have a vivid and humble faith in the Eucharistic mystery, to remember always that it is the great memorial of the Death of the Lord. To have this practical faith in the Eucharist which is expressed most directly and most solemnly through assistance at the Catholic Mass, is the one supreme privilege of the believer : through this he differs profoundly in his soul from the unbeliever, from the heretic : were he to approach Communion once only in the

year, in that solemn spirit of eating the Easter Lamb of the New Testament, he would be fulfilling Christ's injunction as to participation in His Body and Blood. Such a Catholic, though not a frequent communicant, is still a constant partaker in the Eucharistic mystery through his very life, through his behaviour, through his attitude at Mass, through all his interests in the Christian cult. It is his faith in the Eucharist that makes him truly a member of the royal priesthood mentioned by S Peter. If he lost his faith in the Real Presence, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, his spiritual estate would have been prodigiously altered : in his soul the temple of God would have been destroyed, the altar of the Lord would have been desecrated.

Eucharistic worship under one aspect or another has always been the badge of Catholicism ; the altar has never ceased to be surrounded by every kind of reverence and splendour, and all Catholic ages have shown spiritual greatness through their Eucharistic genius : they have all loved the Christ who is a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.

Perhaps the most typical rite and the one which bears the stamp of modernity more than any other is the practice of celebrating Mass before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, *coram Sanctissimo,* with a view of glorifying the

Eucharist Itself. There seems to be in such a rite a redundance, nay, an overlapping of divine things which some might find bewildering. Experience, however, teaches that the Catholic people love such solemnities and that they are not confused by a doubling and trebling of Eucharistic Presentation. Logically considered, this rite is as simple and as harmonious as, for instance, the celebration of the Easter Mass. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is a Sacrifice of thanksgiving; that is shown by its very name; we celebrate it to give thanks to God above all things for the whole work of Redemption, we give thanks for Christ's Death, Resurrection and Ascension; we give thanks for the glory of the saints: "Receive, O holy Trinity, this offering which we make to thee in remembrance of the passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honour of blessed Mary, ever a virgin, of blessed John the Baptist, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, of these and of all the saints." But we can also give thanks for the Eucharist itself, for its institution for all its glories. When we celebrate Mass in honour of the saints the rite is complete then only when their bodies, their relics, are on the altar: "Of these" said the prayer just quoted, by which words reference is made to the Saints whose relics are present. So we can also, through the

Eucharistic Sacrifice, give thanks to God with the Eucharist present on the altar as the most precious of all relics, as the truest of all presences. The Church would be happy to see the Saints themselves, Peter and Paul, on the altar when she gives thanks for their glory ; then she could say with loving emphasis : " Receive, O holy Trinity, this offering which we make to Thee in remembrance . . . of these." But such a thing is not possible. It is possible, however, to have present the Eucharistic Christ Himself, for whom we give thanks to the Trinity, through the offerings of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The Eucharistic Body of Christ can be truly the most precious ornament of that altar on which the Sacrifice is offered up. This modern practice then is in perfect keeping with all we know of the sacramental character of the Eucharist. The Host which remains from one Sacrifice may well be used to adorn the Altar at the next Sacrifice.

XXIV

CHRISTIAN VIGILANCE

THERE is throughout all Christian literature a note of sadness which, even in the Gospels and the Epistles, is already strongly pronounced. It comes from the realisation that God has built for man the glorious house of the new Testament and that man, to a very large extent, is an unworthy dweller therein, that he falls miserably short of the dignity to which he has been called. From the Christian point of view the greatest possible evil is to be unworthy of Him who has called us. Man has been put in the midst of immense treasures, he has been given a work of super-excellency ; but he is never without his dangers, he may betray his great trust, he may show himself undeserving of every confidence. Christ describes His achievement in the following words :

" Even as a man who going into a far country left his house and gave authority to his servants over every work and commanded the porter to watch." (Mark xiii, 34.)

The last words reveal the sad possibilities which still remain after all that has been done.

Man may become lax, may become indifferent, may fall asleep, nay, he may even give himself up inside that palace of God to riotousness. The servant's downward grade is thus described :

" That evil servant shall say in his heart : My lord is long in coming : And shall begin to strike his fellow servants and shall eat and drink with drunkards." (Matt. xxiv, 48-50.)

This, then, is the Church's great task in this world : she has to watch over her precious treasure, she can never feel sure that her children will use wisely the divine opportunities put at their disposal.

Periods of greater fervour are really periods of greater watchfulness, of more developed alertness, of more intense keenness about the meaning of the divine Covenant. Watchfulness is always distinguished by our Lord from the other virtues of the Christian profession ; one has the impression that by it He means an exercise of man's powers which differs from the other acts of the supernatural life as the subjective differs from the objective, as analysis differs from synthesis, to borrow words from other spheres of thought. We cannot, of course, give to watchfulness a merely human character, as if it were man's share of activity and usefulness in that house of God which is so full of desirable things of every kind ; vigilance is as much the

effect of the grace before, that accompanies, that follows the act, as in every other spiritual deed. Still I may say that if any portion of man's supernatural efficiency were to be attributed more directly to man himself, it would be this sense of spiritual watchfulness.

Our great reforming saints have had supreme excellence in this quality. It is the special spirit that broods over the Councils of the Church and that animates her Hierarchy. One would not be far wrong, I think, in considering that movement which is so pronounced to-day and which goes by the name of Retreat or the Spiritual Exercises, as an especial outpouring of that Spirit who watches over souls lest they be deceived by the world and its glamour: "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die"; thus the Spirit addressed the head of the Church in Sardis who had the name of being alive, but was dead; he had heard and he had received the mysteries of God, but in the midst of them he had fallen into the sleep of sin:

"If then thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief: and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee." (Apoc. iii, 3.)

This reproach is truly the key to much in the history of Catholicism; even periods with the external splendours of faith everywhere may

have failed grievously in this paramount task of watching. The spiritual psychology of such times is extremely difficult to decipher ; there is so strange a blending of opposite elements ; at every turn faith and hope, and even charity, show forth the gold of grace, and yet there is something alarming, almost sinister in the midst of it all ; a great danger threatening. "What is wrong?" one asks oneself. Must we not conclude that whilst the house of the faith was still standing firm and everybody was apparently carrying out his office, spiritual watchfulness had been relaxed and the powers of evil were finding a way into the citadel of grace?

"I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." (Eph. iv, 1.)

S Paul was certainly one of those who suffered most keenly at the sight of the failure of Christians to understand the privileges of their election ; he felt like an artist whose sense of beauty is offended at every turn ; for him the Christian life was all splendour and triumph ; to fall away from that ideal was the only evil which concerned him ; that one who was named a brother should be a railer or a drunkard or an extortioner was his only true cause for anxiety.

For Peter also the supreme privilege was that : "You are the children of the prophets and

of the testament which God made to our fathers." (Acts iii, 25.) And to him all good works had but one end, to "make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (II Pet. i, 10, 11.)

If there is one thing that ought to be banished from the heart of the Christian it is that dreadful feeling of spiritual solitude and isolation, that sombre impression that he is walking a lonely road. His entrance into the splendours of the Kingdom is, on the contrary, truly "abundant."

How may we describe the attitude of the man who understands the Covenant into which he has been called? His chief fear in life is lest he should do anything that might render him unworthy of his high vocation : sin is the greatest of all evils to him because it is a disloyalty to his class, to that society of God and the saints, to that magnificent tradition of the supernatural family of which he is a member. The sense of an established supernatural order is to him like a second nature ; he no more doubts it than he doubts the physical order of the cosmos ; he no more fears for its stability than he fears for the regular recurrence of the seasons. He knows himself to have been redeemed, to

have been purchased with a great price, and his permanent conviction concerning this privileged state makes him ready to accept the whole supernatural economy as an arrangement of grace which has all the qualities of supreme reasonableness and perfect equity. He takes it absolutely for granted that salvation is quite a feasible proposition in his own personal case, and he is ready to believe in God's goodness and mercy towards all men. He is no curious investigator of God's secret counsels with regard to other people, knowing that for himself God is One who deals with complete fairness and simplicity. His great desire in life is to see God glorified, not in some recondite fashion only, but through an official public worship whose splendours he loves and whose meaning is manifest to him. He has all the airs of a resolute pragmatist, though there be nothing holier to him than the doctrinal aspects of his faith. His very assurance about the supreme certainty of the divine Institution, the Church, gives him a freedom to deal with human evil which is not the portion of those whose religion is of the subjective and experimental character. He knows that human sinfulness can in no wise detract from the perfection, not only of the divine ideal, but also of the divine Institution ; therefore he is above scandal, above those discouragements which come to man when

he loses sight of the divine elements in Christianity. The Covenant for him is not only a beautiful ideal but it is a real, clearly defined establishment of grace which remains untouched, unmoved, uncontaminated, in the midst of all the failures of individual men.

So there is in the child of the Covenant a great hopefulness, we might almost call it a spiritual resilience, which enables him to see triumphs, to perceive the dawn of glory, even in the darkest hours. There is also a wonderful certainty in such a one with regard to the sacramental order, that most marvellous instance of covenanted grace. The powers of the Catholic priesthood are accepted as readily as the powers of any state administration, and the altar of God with the Eucharistic Sacrifice looms larger in his consciousness than any other monument or achievement of civilisation. The blessed spirits before the throne of the Most High, the holy Mother of God, the elect of all times are to him, not merely distant realities or historic personages but active partners in that great pact of Charity that has taken hold of him and has made of him the citizen of another World.

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